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© Peter Post.

Back Cover – Cassin’s Kingbird, Floyd Bennett Field, Kings, 26 Dec 2014,
© Doug Gochfeld.

WINTER WATERFOWL COUNT, JANUARY 2015

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A total of 344 volunteers went into the field 17-25 January 2015 and conducted the New York State Ornithological Association's January Waterfowl Count. The volunteers logged 861 hours and counted 340,517 waterfowl. The methodology of the count was described in detail by B. L. Swift (2007: January waterfowl counts, 2005-2007, and some observations on long-term trends. *The Kingbird* 57:198-213).

WEATHER CONDITIONS

Weather data from Buffalo, Ithaca, Plattsburgh, Kingston, and Islip showed that temperatures were generally mild through December. During January, overnight temperatures throughout the state fell to single digits on several evenings before the start of the count period. In the central and northern part of the state, overnight temperatures fell well below 0° F. Consequently still and slow-moving water was frozen through much of the state during the count period.

RESULTS

In this summary, I will compare this year's numbers with those of the decade, 2001-2010. The 2015 total count, mentioned above, was less than the decade average of 383,706. Nevertheless, it was well within the standard deviation for that decade. The total was about 40,000 less than the 2014 count. The counts of geese, diving ducks, and non-Anseriformes waterfowl were below the decade average, but within that decade's standard deviation. The swan and dabbling duck counts were significantly above the decade average.

Counts for 15 species were above the previous decade's average. Of these, White-fronted Goose, Tundra Swan, Gadwall, Green-winged Teal, Redhead, and Common Eider were outside the standard deviation of the previous decade. The count of 2724 Tundra Swans was the highest since the count began in 1973.

Counts for 24 species were below the previous decade's average. Those outside the standard deviation of the previous decade were Mute Swan, Wood Duck, American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Surf Scoter, Common Goldeneye, Ruddy Duck, and Pied-billed Grebe.

LONG-TERM TRENDS

The record number of Tundra Swans recorded in 2015 was the second record count for that species in three years. This seems to reinforce that the species continues to have a long-term trend of an increasing winter population in New

York State. The increase has not been a steady one, however. Early snow cover and freezing of shallow waters can mask the overall upward trend in some years by forcing Tundra Swans to leave the State.

Canvasback continued to rebound from the record low count recorded in 2013. The 2015 count was still below the decade average for 2001-2010. Region 1 reported the vast majority. The species continued to decline in Region 10.

Hooded Mergansers were increasing through 2008. Since then the numbers have fluctuated. The 2015 count was well below the average for 2001-2010, but well above the overall average for 1973-2015.

By comparing 2001-2010 averages with 1973-2015 averages one might detect other long-term trends in New York State's winter waterfowl populations. Some of this year's counts seem to support trends indicated in this way. Long-term increases may be indicated for Gadwall, Mallard, Redhead, Tufted Duck, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, and Red-breasted Merganser. Long-term decreases may be occurring for American Wigeon, American Black Duck, scaup (sp), White-winged Scoter, and Great Cormorant.

FUTURE COUNTS

You can help with the 2016 count by contacting your regional compiler. Compiler contact information and historical data are available online at:
<http://nybirds.org/ProjWaterfowl.htm>

For planning purposes, the January Waterfowl Count is conducted in a period that begins the Saturday before Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (the third Monday in January). The next two count periods will be:

- 2016 – January 16-24 (target date Sunday, January 17)
- 2017 – January 14-22 (target date Sunday, January 15)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to everyone who participated in the 2015 January Waterfowl Count. The field observers again endured some very cold temperatures during the count period. Regional and local compilers and coordinators deserve special thanks for making sure that the state had good coverage and for compiling the data in a timely manner. The regional compilers, this year, were:

Region	Compiler	Region	Compiler
1	Jim Landau	6	Jerry LeTendre
2	Robert Spahn	7	Gary Lee
3	Thomas Bell	8	Bryan Swift
4	Gail Kirch	9	Tracey Shimer
5	Bill Purcell	10	Ronald Borque

Table 1. Regional totals for the 2014 January Waterfowl Count.

Species/Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Goose, White-fronted	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	15	19
Blue	0	0	0	0	0		0	0		0	0
Snow	0	0	24	0	4	0	0	0	150	21	199
Ross's	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0
Canada	4,325	5,730	30,486	2,900	6380	273	1,321	752	27,189	38,979	118,335
Cackling	0	8	0	0	0		0	0	2	0	10
Brant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	208	15,942	16,150
Swan, Mute	10	108	17	1	21	14	0	0	191	969	1,331
Trumpeter	1	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Tundra	557	8	2,117	0	0	42	0	0	0	0	2,724
Wood Duck	1	1	0	0	3	0	2	2	0	6	15
Gadwall	30	43	90	9	16	14	0	0	194	1,681	2,077
Wigeon, Eurasian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	426	3	429
American	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	53	517	576
Am. Black Duck	210	372	1,912	411	333	189	100	129	587	6,557	10,800
Mallard	3,975	4,080	8,979	2,363	2953	385	2,377	2,321	5,646	7,820	40,899
Mallard X Black	8	1	8	1	0	1	0	1	17	81	118
Blue-winged Teal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3
Northern Shoveler	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	231	234
Northern Pintail	3	3	10	18	0	0	1	0	11	88	134
Green-winged Teal	1	0	5	0	0	2	0	0	2	444	454
Canvasback	12,712	11	553	0	23	0	0	0	154	119	13,572
Redhead	1,151	147	27,379	4	468	2	0	0	1	52	29,204
Ring-necked Duck	44	2	552	7	32	0	16	0	160	395	1,208
Tufted Duck	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	15
Scaup, Greater	7,729	110	534	0	113	34	0	4	2,932	12,496	23,952
Lesser	245	38	1,095	0	16	1	0	1	37	1,178	2,611
not to species	378	40	153	0	5	0	6	0	0	1,869	2,451
Eider, King	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Common	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10,802	10,802

Species/Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Harlequin Duck	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	9	10
Scoter, Surf	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	65	920	993
White-winged	97	40	7	1	4	7	0	0	37	2,212	2,405
Black	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	800	801
not to species	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	190	3,369	3,559
Long-tailed Duck	1,307	1,928	4	0	62	40	0	0	189	5,095	8,625
Bufflehead	3,454	75	324	2	104	66	94	0	658	5,714	10,491
Goldeneye, Common	3,223	1,295	1,330	54	919	1,725	814	105	201	1,381	11,047
Barrow's	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	4
Merganser, Hooded	97	13	93	150	163	3	7	33	152	898	1,609
Common	2,703	364	1,659	417	1884	1,323	546	131	1,185	175	10,387
Red-breasted	1,897	2,169	271	1	400	417	5	1	123	2,341	7,625
not to species	0	0		0	0	0	0	0		0	0
Ruddy Duck	5	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	45	1,385	1,445
Loon, Red-throated	0	5	0	0	1	0	4	0	39	108	157
Common	0	0	8	0	1	0	0	0	14	257	280
Yellow-billed	0	0		0	0	0	0	0		0	0
not to species	0	0		0	0	0	0	0		0	0
Grebe, Pied-billed	4	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	17	26
Horned	2	12	12	0	4	0	10	0	17	316	373
Red-necked	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	6	11
Eared	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Cormorant, D.-crested	128	1	5	0	10	0	0	0	1	80	225
Great	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	41	73
not to species	0	0		0	0	0	0	0		0	0
American Coot	87	32	1,123	49	29	1	0	0	64	276	1,661
Other/Unidentified	28	4	188	0	0	74	0	0	49	33	376
TOTAL OF ABOVE	44,417	16,652	78,963	6,389	13,953	4,614	5,303	3,480	41,027	125,719	340,517

Table 2. Comparison of 2014 January Waterfowl Counts to Ten-year and Long Term averages.

Species	2015	Avg '01-'10	% Difference	Avg '73-'15	% Difference
Goose, White-fronted	19	6	239	2	766
Blue	0	0		0	
Snow	199	12944	-98	3405	-94
Ross's	0	0	-100	0	-100
Canada	118335	143674	-18	90236	31
Cackling	10			6	67
Brant	16150	16519	-2	15392	5
Swan, Mute	1331	1682	-21	1323	1
Trumpeter	8	42	-81	11	-28
Tundra	2724	857	218	380	617
Wood Duck	15	46	-67	37	-59
Gadwall	2077	1520	37	1138	83
Wigeon, Eurasian	3	4	-23	4	-16
American	576	1319	-56	1492	-61
Am. Black Duck	10800	12141	-11	17249	-37
Mallard	41325	39594	4	34559	20
Mallard X Black	118	186	-36	85	39
Blue-winged Teal	3	4	-27	4	-22
Northern Shoveler	234	451	-48	283	-17
Northern Pintail	134	149	-10	192	-30
Green-winged Teal	454	261	74	267	70
Canvasback	13572	14722	-8	11444	19
Redhead	29204	15601	87	11074	164
Ring-necked Duck	1208	1321	-9	807	50
Tufted Duck	15	4	249	2	641
Scaup, Greater	23952	32549	-26	27895	-14
Lesser	2611	2538	3	1582	65
not to species	2451	6367	-62	17229	-86
Eider, King	2	8	-73	7	-69
Common	10802	1183	813	1300	731
Harlequin Duck	10	14	-30	8	29

Species	2015	Avg '01-'10	% Difference	Avg '73-'15	% Difference
Scoter, Surf	993	6028	-84	2931	-66
White-winged	2405	5502	-56	7127	-66
Black	801	3488	-77	1296	-38
not to species	3559	3192	11	2259	58
Long-tailed Duck	8625	6854	26	5411	59
Bufflehead	10491	8287	27	6788	55
Goldeneye, Common	11047	15701	-30	13239	-17
Barrow's	4	18	-78	6	-33
Merganser, Hooded	1609	1766	-9	956	68
Common	10387	10211	2	11006	-6
Red-breasted	7625	7552	1	5466	39
not to species	0	0		0	
Ruddy Duck	1445	3808	-62	2400	-40
Loon, Red-throated	157	298	-47	110	42
Common	280	367	-24	218	28
Yellow-billed	0	0		0	-100
not to species	0	0		0	-100
Grebe, Pied-billed	26	82	-68	79	-67
Horned	373	479	-22	383	-3
Red-necked	11	8	31	5	123
Eared	2	1	67	0	413
Cormorant, D.-crested	225	261	-14	163	38
Great	73	130	-44	156	-53
not to species	0	0		1	-100
American Coot	1661	2252	-26	2018	-18
unidentified	376	1720	-78	1276	-71
Total	340517	383706	-11	300704	13
Total Geese	135073	173143	-22	109045	24
Total Swans	3734	2580	45	1706	119
Total Ducks	198532	202385	-2	185542	7
Dabbling ducks	69615	55673	25	55648	25
Diving ducks	128917	146712	-12	129895	-1
Loons, Grebes, Corms, Coot	2802	3879	-28	3135	-11

TWO “SHORT-BILLED” MEW GULLS, *Larus canus brachyrhynchus*, IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK—THE FIRST FOR LONG ISLAND AND COASTAL NEW YORK

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Since moving to Bay Ridge Brooklyn in August 2009, I have spent countless hours checking out the winter gull flocks that congregate along the Belt Parkway between the Verrazano Bridge and the Caesar's Bay Shopping Center approximately two miles south of the bridge. I also frequent the Veterans Memorial Pier and Owl's Head Wastewater treatment plant at the base of Bay Ridge Avenue. This is about 2.25 miles north of the Verrazano Bridge. In the course of these efforts, I have been fortunate enough to discover four Mew Gulls (*Larus canus*) in this area, from 29 December 2009 to February 2015. The first two were attributable to the nominate European race *L. c. canus*, as have been all prior records of the species from coastal New York State. The most recent two were attributable to the western North American race *L. c. brachyrhynchus*, representing the first and second records of this taxon for Long Island and adjacent coastal New York State. This is the story of the latter two.

The Belt Parkway borders the Narrows and Gravesend Bay (officially Lower New York Bay). Between the Belt and the bay there is a bike/walking path. Three different parking lots allow for viewing the bridge or accessing the bike path and waterfront. One is just north of the bridge and although there are usually some Ring-bills hanging out there, I find the majority of gulls tend to congregate around the two parking lots south of the bridge, waiting no doubt for a car to pull up, driven by a hominid in possession of day old carbs.

My usual route is to enter the Belt at the 4th Avenue entrance nearest my home and stop at the first parking lot along the Belt just south of the bridge. The largest congregation of gulls along the Belt is usually here. Often 700+ Ring-billed Gulls fill the open field between the parking lot and Gravesend Bay. The sheer numbers are always a draw, but I have never found a Common/Mew gull in this flock. After this stop I normally continue east to the second parking lot, which is just north of the Caesar's Bay Shopping Center and the Bensonhurst Park baseball fields. The ballfields are the location of my first Common Gull discovery, in December 2009.

On Jan 21, 2015 I followed this pattern and as usual found nothing unusual in the large flock adjacent to the first parking lot. I continued on to the second lot where there is often someone—yes, a hominid—feeding the gulls and pigeons. On this day there was someone feeding further south along the bike pathway that ends at Caesar's Bay and I proceeded to walk in that direction. Before I could actually start down the path, though—it took me some time to get

my winter gear on—I saw the person that was feeding the gulls (and pigeons) had finished. There were a fair number of birds still swirling around, but many of them had started flying back toward me and began to settle down on the exposed rocks that line the seawall that separates Gravesend Bay from the bike path. Almost all of the gulls were adult Ring-bills with a few second winter and even fewer first winter birds mixed in. One bird jumped out at me as it flew down to the rocks as being much browner overall and smaller than the other gulls in the flock. I initially thought it was going to be a juvenile/first winter Ring-billed or even an extremely small first winter Herring. When the bird landed a bit to the north of the parking lot and I got my bins on it, my heart leapt into my throat as I realized this looked nothing like any Herring or Ring-billed I had ever seen.

Its tiny dove-like head and large beady eye gave it a gentler expression than the fierce countenance of a Ring-billed. The bill was much thinner and colored differently as well, with the basal half being a distinctive blue-green color and end of the bill being black. The gonydeal angle was not as pronounced as in Ring-billed Gull. The legs were a mixture of dull pink and the same blue-green of the bill, with the pink concentrated in the lower legs and feet and becoming more blue-green above the knee joint. The mantle and scapulars were a mixture of medium brown juvenile feathers with white edges and newer adult like gray feathers. The lesser and median coverts were also medium brown with white edging, with the bases of the lower row of median coverts fading to white. Something that stood out was the washed out greater coverts which formed an obvious whitish rectangular on the standing bird from both the left and right side. The tertials were a darker brown with the upper feathers also faded. The primaries were a dark brown though not black and were tipped in white, though that seemed to my eye to be an effect of wear as well. The base color of the head was whitish but finely streaked with brown, with the heaviest streaking on the top of the head and around the eye.

The throat, chest and stomach of the bird were a marbled medium brown and white, a very distinctive pattern that I didn't really recall seeing on any other gulls. I kept referring to it as a "turbulence pattern" as it reminded me of something I vaguely recall seeing in a documentary about tornadoes or hurricanes. The lower belly had a small white patch that contrasted with the rest of the underside, but this was only really visible in flight. The tail was whitish with medium brown barring and a fairly wide dark brown tail band. The under tail was also white with brown barring. This pattern to the upper tail is one of the best distinguishing marks between a first winter *L. brachyrhynchus* and *L. canus*, although I did not know this at the time.

The bird initially perched on the rocks for a couple of minutes but then flew up and sat on the railing alongside Ring-billeds (including right next to a first winter Ring-bill) and all of the above mentioned field marks made the bird stand out as something decidedly different. I was photographing the entire time, but at some point I called Doug Gochfeld and described the bird as best I could. I

honestly can't say I was positive what I was looking at at the time as I hadn't seen a Common/Mew Gull in this plumage before, but when I sent a text message with a photo to Doug his response was "I'm chasing—looks like maybe a western Mew."

For the next 15 minutes or so the bird meandered to the north along the seawall, flying short distances before settling back on the rocks. At one point it regurgitated an unidentifiable morsel and then proceeded to eat it again, actively defending itself from the Ring-bills that tried to steal it from him. Just as Doug was arriving, the gulls picked up and started heading en masse back south toward Caesar's Bay. I was initially concerned the bird might continue on to the south but it very cooperatively chose to alight on top of Toys-R-Us where Doug quickly spotted it, and the requisite high fives were shared.

The bird continued being cooperative by flying around and landing on the railing within 30 feet or so of us and we both were able to get great photo documentation. It then flew to the north over the Belt Parkway and dropped down out of sight, a maneuver that it would repeat on multiple occasions over the next two months. I went looking for it while Doug waited for Shai Mitra to arrive, but I could not relocate it on any roofs or the small bit of Bensonhurst Park that is north of there. I went home at that point, but the bird did return to Caesar's Bay where Shai and Doug got looks at it again. Unfortunately this initial period would be one of the few times one could label the bird as cooperative.

Although it was seen a few times—albeit briefly—over the next couple of days, its appearances got further and further apart as January rolled into February and March. Despite searching for it 25 or 30 times over that period, I only saw it four more times: in the early morning of 22 January, with a small group that included Bobby Rossetti and Peter Post; mid-morning of 25 January, roosting on the ball fields; and mid-afternoon on 1 February, when it stayed around for about 20 minutes and I was able to get some additional photos. My last sighting was on 19 February, when it was roosting among Ring-bills on the tide exposed rocks just north of the BJ's Wholesale Club that is 300-400 yards south of Caesar's Bay. After five minutes it picked up and flew—you guessed it—north and over the Belt Parkway.

I also searched some of the other known areas in Brooklyn for roosting Ring-bills (Coney Island, Floyd Bennett boat launch, etc.) but never came across the bird anywhere else.

The second Mew gull was found on the Veterans Memorial Pier in the late morning of 9 February, and was observed for exactly 10 minutes, from 11:18-11:28, according to my time stamped photos. On cold blustery days I often find that gulls like to hunker down on the pier, the strong wind being somewhat broken up by the fence/railing that runs along the sides and end of the pier and the few metal benches on the pier itself. Whenever I am driving past and I see more than a few gulls on the pier I park and check them out. This is how I found

the second Common Gull in January 2014 and I have found a couple of different Black-headed Gulls here as well.

On this day there were several hundred gulls on the pier. They tend to cluster in 2 to 3 groups and are often hidden behind the benches so you can't just set your scope down and scan the whole pier at once. I was actually working my way past the first group of gulls when I spotted a first winter Bonaparte's in the second group of gulls ahead of me (I saw its legs first). At that point I could see the rest of the birds on the pier ahead of me well enough to see that there was nothing else unusual and I turned back to head toward home.

I scanned the first group naked-eye again to make sure I hadn't overlooked anything. I had. Not 20 feet away, sitting near but somewhat separate from the other gulls (which were all Ring-bills), was a very small, dark gray-mantled gull that had a thin reedy blue-gray bill with a dark tip. Its head, hind neck and sides of the neck were streaked brown with the heaviest streaking centered around its large black beady eye. The visible median and greater coverts were a browner gray than the mantle and appeared to be older than the mantle feathers, with the median coverts in particular being well worn. There were prominent tertial and scapular crescents present, and a wide secondary skirt visible on the folded wings. The primaries were almost blackish with gray bases visible. A large white mirror was visible on the underside of P-10. The underside of the bird was mostly white with just a few random brown streaks, mostly in the chest and vent. When the bird stood up at one point I could see the legs were mostly blue-green with just a little yellowish in some spots. The webs of the feet were a pretty bright pink. This time I was pretty sure what I was looking at; despite the plumage being different, the size and jizz of the bird reminded me of the earlier Mew and not of the two Commons.

After about eight minutes, during which I had got the word out, the entire group lifted off the pier. The strong north east winds quickly blew the bird over the water and although a lot of the Ring-bills returned to the pier, the Mew just kept flying—or being blown—toward Staten Island where I lost sight of it. I initially was just photographing the bird as it flew away, so any additional field marks were not really noted in the field, but studied in the photos later. Again the wide secondary skirt stood out, as did a large mirror on P10 and a smaller one on P9. There were brownish black markings in the median and lesser primary coverts, and there were remnants of a tail band.

The overall size and jizz, the tiny bill with the lack of a well defined dark mark (a Z or ring), the presence of white tongues in P8-5, a dark terminal band on P4, the smudginess of the brown in the head and neck (versus fine streaking in Common), the partial tail band and the overall more immature appearance of the bird all point to *L. brachyrhynchus* for this bird as well.

Despite searching for it a few times over the next week and at the same time still looking for the original Mew just south of there, this individual never returned. The same cannot be said for me, as I will be returning to these locations again and again.

ARETAS ANDREWS SAUNDERS—A PIONEERING NATURALIST (1884-1970)

Mark Gretch

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Aretas A. Saunders was born November 15, 1884 in Avon, Connecticut. During his boyhood he lived in Hartford and New Haven. Brauner (1979) wrote, “Wherever he lived he explored the surroundings on foot and bicycle, becoming very familiar with the natural history of the region.” He attended Yale University and Yale School of Forestry, graduating in 1907. After graduation from Yale, he joined the United States Forest Service. In 1912 he left the Forest Service to teach, which he did until 1949.

Saunders was a pioneering naturalist/birder. He documented the avian fauna from one end of New York State to the other, particularly in Allegany State Park, the Northern Adirondack Mountains and the central New York wetlands. In the following pages I have cited some of his more significant publications concerning the occurrence and life histories of New York State birds.

In 1921 he began summer work at the Roosevelt Wildlife Forest Experiment Station in Allegany State Park. His observations between July 3 and August 13 resulted in the publication *The Summer Birds of Allegany State Park* (Saunders 1923). He writes that “to help bird students to know where to look for certain birds [he] grouped the species in the main text in ecological associations, rather than in taxonomical order.” Saunders documented 105 species present in Allegany State Park. It is interesting to compare his sightings with the most recent New York State Breeding Bird Atlas survey for Allegany State Park (McGowan and Corwin 2008). For example, atlas observers recorded the presence of Osprey, Common Raven and Turkey Vulture—large, conspicuous species not recorded by Saunders in 1921.

In addition, during the summers of 1927 to 1940, he was instructor of ornithology at the Allegany School of Natural History. Arthur Cleveland Bent, in his *Life Histories of North American Flycatchers, Larks, Swallows and Their Allies* (1963) cited observations by A.A. Saunders and his students of a Least Flycatcher nest in Allegany State Park that showed “that the parents fed the young 24 times an hour, as an average in 13¾ hours of observation.” Saunders’ notes, especially concerning song, appear frequently in the A.C. Bent *Life Histories of North American Birds* series. For example, Bent (1965) writes, “Saunders has written a very excellent analysis of the song and notes of the meadowlark...” and goes on to explain in great detail the cadence and quality of the song.

In 1925 and 1926 Saunders would travel to the northern Adirondack Mountains to document its avian fauna. His observations resulted in the

publication *The Summer Birds of the Northern Adirondack Mountains* (Saunders 1929). In his introduction he addresses those who would climb to the top of these mountains. "Yes the view from the top was beautiful and worth the long climb. But there were other things as well. Did you stop on your way up to observe the "pretty wood sorrel, flower and leaves that carpet the forest floor?" Did you "stop to breathe the sweet odor of the twin-flower?" Did you "admire the tall straight trunks of the maples and the spruces and moss-covered, fern-draped logs and boulders?" And did you "recall the clear whistle of the white throated sparrow, the dainty black and yellow of a magnolia warbler, the tinkling trills of the winter wren, and the wonderful music of the hermit thrush? Had clouds obscured the view when you reached the top, these alone would have been worth the climb."

It is also entertaining to compare the common and scientific names of birds used by Saunders in this 1925/26 publication with those in use today. Back in that era some of the common names included sparrow hawk, pigeon hawk, and chicken hawk, Canada spruce partridge, myrtle warble and Acadian chickadee.

In *The Summer Birds of Central New York Marshes*, Saunders (1926) says, "how much broader and saner our outlook on life becomes by turning to nature and wild places for recreation." And in marshes, "we overlook the great value of these things that we cannot measure in money." He expounds on the importance of setting aside grasslands, marshes and other areas inhabited by wildlife unique to those areas, admonishes nature lovers to pay closer attention to the marshes, and warns of draining these marshes that highly specialized wildlife depend on for food, shelter, and breeding habitat. Saunders' report consists mainly of accounts of the habitat of the marsh-inhabiting birds. He presents us with excellent life histories of a much neglected group of birds, and pleads that "provisions be made for saving what marshlands remain...before they are entirely exterminated."

In 1930/31 Saunders studied the birds of the Quaker Run Valley, one of the principal streams of Allegany State Park (Saunders 1936). This study covered an area of some 26½ square miles and 16,967 acres. He found 79 breeding bird species in the area. In this study he quantitated the occurrence of these species by reporting the total number of pairs and average number of pairs per 100 acres. In 1983 to 1985, 50 years after Saunders' analysis, Timothy Baird repeated the analysis and reported the changes in breeding bird populations (Baird 1990). He found the species composition had changed but the total number of species remained the same. Maturation of the forest and increased browsing of the understory by white-tailed deer were the two most significant changes in the habitat of Quaker Run during the 50 years span of time since Saunders' analysis.

Saunders contributed much to the study of bird song, noting in the acknowledgement section of his 1951 edition of *A Guide To Bird Songs* that he had made a special study of birds' song for 35 or more years. In this publication he develops a unique graphic notation, a musical shorthand as he calls it, which

takes into account five characteristics of bird song: time, pitch, loudness (intensity), quality and phonetics (pronunciation). In addition he includes the familiar mnemonic phrases for many species. In another publication, *An Introduction to Bird Life for Bird Watchers* (1954), in the chapter 'The Study of Songs and Calls' Saunders distinguishes between flight song, territory song, courtship song, nesting song, and whisper song. He also describes the timing of the various types of songs during the seasons of the year. In this publication and others he raises many questions concerning bird song, prompting further study.

Saunders' publications and the observations therein would be referred to and built upon in many future studies of the birds of New York, such as John Bull's *Birds of New York State* (1974), *The Kingbird*, and the two completed Breeding Bird Atlas projects. His publications continue to serve as primary documents that facilitate the continuing process of more fully documenting the occurrence, ecology and life history of birds across New York State.

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NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

A Multi-species Feeding Aggregation Involving Gulls and Common Loons on Lake Champlain

The unusual, frenzied predatory behavior of flocks of four gull species plus one or two Common Loons on a concentrated patch of aquatic animals was observed on Lake Champlain, New York State. Possible interpretations of the relationships between loons and gulls are presented.

On numerous occasions in late October and early November, 2014, my attention was drawn to small flocks of gulls flying, hovering, and plunging into a very small area at the surface of the lake. Observations (with a Kowa 20X-60X zoom telescope at a distance of about one mile) revealed that one or two loons were momentarily visible beneath the aerial group of gulls as the loons briefly surfaced and then apparently voraciously fed on some prey items (presumably fish) just below the water's surface, together with the plunging gulls. Superficially, it appeared that the loons' diving and surfacing behavior caused some prey animals to be brought close to the water surface, where they became vulnerable to predation by the gulls.

From the brief appearances of the loons when they surfaced it could only be determined that they were probably Common Loons, in non-breeding plumage. It seems there were only one or two individuals involved at any one occasion.

Lake Champlain has a large population of yellow perch; Decker et al. (around 1980) state that young yellow perch travel in schools, feeding on zooplankton. A school of small fish would be an example of such a prey species that would provide a large enough biomass to elicit the observed feeding behavior of the gulls and loons. McIntyre (1988) states that yellow perch is a very common prey species of the Common Loon in many lakes in its breeding range. McIntyre (1988) observed a captive Common Loon rapidly swallowing 124 fathead minnows underwater, which would agree with the fact that I never saw the loons at the surface, ingesting a fish. Also, Forbush and May (1939) state, "Often little fish are swallowed under water."

The gull species were: Great Black-backed Gull (only a few adults and immatures), Herring Gull (only a few adults and immatures), Ring-billed Gull (numerous adults and immatures), and Bonaparte's Gull (a few in nonbreeding plumage). The predatory behavior of the several gull species was different, apparently caused by the size of the gull and its ability to reach the prey animals, which must have been within less than a foot below the water surface. The Bonaparte's Gull was the smallest species and it was the most active; flying and hovering at one or two yards above the water surface, it would plunge head first into the water, totally submerging its body. Its small size must have required this behavior in order to reach the prey animals. The Great Black-backed Gull was the largest species and it always remained floating at the surface and then

lunging forward and downward to submerge the foremost half of its body to reach downward into the water. Apparently it could rely on this behavior to reach the prey animals. The Herring Gull and the Ring-billed Gull (it was not possible to always distinguish between the two species) mostly behaved similar to the Bonaparte's Gull, plunging head first into the water from about one to a few yards above the water. However, their bodies did not entirely submerge. Occasionally, what appeared to be a Herring Gull started from a swimming position and lunged forward and downward into the water, similar to the behavior of the Great Black-backed Gull.

As time progressed, this conspicuous behavior apparently attracted more gulls. The early aggregations usually numbered about a dozen birds, but sometimes this increased to around 50 gulls. The duration of these episodes could last intermittently for hours, depending on the presence and behavior of the loons.

This multi-species behavior was observed at all levels of wind strength (from calm to very windy) and water surfaces from smooth to white-capped waves. These observations occurred in Treadwell Bay, near Pointe au Roche State Park in Clinton County, Town of Beekmantown, where the water is about 25-35 feet deep.

I could not ascertain what conditions or circumstances were present to initiate these episodes of predatory behavior, because they were well underway when I noticed the swarming activity of the gulls. It may be that some underwater behavior of the loons caused an abundance of prey animals to be brought up near the lake surface, where they were fed upon. This would have attracted the attention of the gulls and they took advantage of the situation to exploit an available source of food. Whenever the gulls were feeding, there always seemed to be loons below, so it appeared that the loons' behavior was a causative factor. In support of this hypothesis, in November, although gulls were present, no swarming and plunging of them was seen. It may be a coincidence, but no loons were visible in the area.

However, another hypothesis is that the prey organisms may have come to the surface independently of the loons; coincidentally both the loons and the gulls were all exploiting the availability of this source of food, each species according to its own capability. In the very comprehensive and detailed life history summary of the Common Loon by McTyre (1988) I found no reference to loons effecting the manipulation of prey animals similar to the foregoing scenario.

Whatever the explanation might be for these episodes (and there may be others), I believe it is an uncommon event and may occur only when there are a number of conditions present. Looking back over many years of observing loons and gulls on Lake Champlain, I do not recall any sightings of the swarming and plunging of so many gulls concentrated in one small area together with the simultaneous presence of loons.

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Harold G. Klein, Plattsburgh, NY



IN MEMORIAM: William W. Watson, 1943-2015

Willie D'Anna

William W. Watson passed away on March 18, 2015, a day after turning 72 years old. Bill was born in Buffalo and he spent almost his entire life living in Western New York. He was a geologist, science teacher, conservationist, and birder. He was elected to the City of Tonawanda board of education for six consecutive terms where he was an ardent advocate for the students. Bill was well known in the birding community of Western New York and the entire state. He was also extremely well-liked with his ready laugh, diligent record-keeping, and regular participation in numerous bird counts, surveys, and activities of the Buffalo Ornithological Society (BOS).

Bill's education included a bachelor's degree in history from Baldwin Wallace University in Ohio in 1965 and a master's degree in geology from SUNY at Buffalo in 1970. He taught science in the Buffalo school district from 1970 to 1996. Shortly after completing his formal education, he married Dorothy in 1971. As Dorothy wrote after Bill's death, they were best friends and soul mates. Although Dorothy was not a birder herself, she traveled with Bill when he did some of his county listing and occasionally would accompany him on a local birding foray.

Betsy Potter and I were with a couple of other birders at LaSalle Park in Buffalo at the end of Lake Erie when a man carrying a huge Celestron astronomy telescope on a tripod walked up. It was 1985 or -86 and this was the first time we met Bill Watson. He wanted to know if we had seen the Parasitic Jaeger that was reported on the Buffalo rare bird alert a few days prior. We told him that we had not but that we had seen some interesting birds. Although I do not recall what birds they were, Bill was interested so we helped him look for them. Bill struggled with his massive scope but eventually he managed to find something of interest. While we had been quietly snickering at his bulky optics, since we had our much more portable scopes, we all were still very eager to look through his. Bill's scope was to be one of his trademarks for several years and he continued to use it even after it had been dropped and the lens cracked. Eventually he upgraded to a used Swarovski scope, which he used with the tripod handle pointing away so that he would be less likely to accidentally move the scope. This was certainly different and it became another of Bill's trademarks.

A few months after meeting Bill, we rode together on a BOS field trip. He was carrying a composition notebook, the kind you would see being used by a high school student. In it, he recorded every species we encountered and its location and for birds that were noteworthy, he wrote down the number observed. These notebooks, of which Bill filled many, became another one of his trademarks. Bill took a scientific approach to birding and for some years he

insisted on seeing the “Peterson field marks” before he would write it down in his notebook. This would slow us down, of course, as I tried to get Bill to see the bird again so that neither he nor anyone else would question our identification. Bill could see the value of using things like shape, behavior, and call notes to identify birds quickly but it was a long time before he considered these to be scientifically valid.

When it came to rare birds, Bill did not display much overt joy at seeing one. It seemed to be just another entry in his notebook, alongside the Mallards and Ring-billed Gulls. At least that was my initial impression. It seemed like every time I urged Bill to go see some rarity with me, he would give some reason why he could not go, and it just seemed like it was not very important to him. However, he would usually still wind up going! After taking an early retirement in 1996, Bill went from being an active birder to being very active. Eventually, he caught the New York county listing bug, recording lists in every county and over 100 species in every *Kingbird* region. His total of 297 species is the biggest list in Erie County.

Bill was an assiduous documenter of rare birds. The BOS developed the “Verification Date Guide” which gives dates when a species requires documentation in order to be accepted into the official body of records. Until recent years, the Date Guide was very conservative, such that an active birder like Bill might have been required to document a dozen or more records in a month. Whereas most of us aspired to “write-up” some of the rarities we saw, Bill seemed to never miss an opportunity. His determination to document as many rarities as possible extended to the state level as well. Although Bill discovered a number of rarities which he documented, he also wrote up practically everything he chased. The New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC) often has to make pointed requests for documentation of rare birds, so Bill’s meticulous reports were gratefully received by NYSARC. Angus Wilson, the chair of NYSARC wrote the following:

I can add that Bill Watson was a prolific contributor to the New York State Avian Records Committee. Every year we received a stack of carefully written reports from 'WW' describing the reviewable rarities that he had either found himself or had chased. The vast majority of his submissions were of course accepted after Committee review but never once did he grumble to us about the few that weren't. To take just one recent example, his report on the 2014 Jefferson County ptarmigan, which is currently in review, was exemplary in its observation and detail, even down to the 'milky grayish white' toenails. His pleasure in seeing and studying this spectacular rarity is rendered vividly in his description and his thoughtful justification for its identification as a Willow rather than Rock Ptarmigan.

Bill will be remembered as a wonderful role model to us all as birders. He was a diligent and enthusiastic observer, clearly a good field companion to many, and a significant contributor to the permanent ornithological record for

western and central New York State. We at NYSARC will most definitely miss hearing from him.

Bill was determined to make contributions to ornithology in other ways as well. He lived near a nesting colony of Great Blue Herons and Black-crowned Night-Herons that was on Motor Island in the Niagara River. Great Egrets eventually joined the colony and Bill made detailed studies of the egrets and Great Blue Herons. Bill had several of his papers published in "The Prothonotary", the newsletter of the BOS, as well as *The Kingbird*. Bill did not own or have use of a boat so his studies of these birds were conducted from the mainland with a scope, nearly a half-mile away! Coincident with the regional population increase of Great Egrets was the increase, to a much larger degree, of Double-crested Cormorants. The cormorant population exploded and islands on the Niagara River were rapidly being colonized by this species. The guano from their dense numbers would eventually kill the trees that they nested in. Although this had little effect upon the cormorants, the herons and egrets would no longer nest in the dead trees. When the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) began shooting cormorants to keep the colonies viable for the herons and egrets, one would have thought that Bill would have been all for it. But instead, he was totally against it. Thereafter, his reports to the regional and statewide birding email lists never simply reported the number of cormorants. He now reported the number of "*beautiful* Double-crested Cormorants."

Andy Mason, the chair of the New York State Ornithological Association's (NYSOA) conservation committee, wrote the following:

Bill was a fine conservationist also. He loved cormorants—one of a small minority—and worked with NYSOA in our attempts to curtail NYSDEC's heavy-handed management of these birds in the Niagara region and elsewhere. Bill participated in a meeting with NYSDEC officials a few years ago, and his well-documented observations and records of cormorants on the Niagara River impressed and were respected by all involved.

Bill was a leader, though not in the obvious ways that many leaders are. While he performed many functions for the BOS and NYSOA, such as program chair, field trip chair, newsletter author, council and board member, it was more in the less obvious things he did that made him a leader. In the 1990s there was a push within the BOS to get more people involved with their bird counts. It was not long before Bill had a large contingent of helpers working the territory he was responsible for. Holly Sweeny was a regular helper who often worked the count with Bill. She recalls one time near the end of a long count day that Bill insisted that they had to go to Royalton Ravine to try for Barred Owl. Holly stayed in the car while Bill went into the park. After a very long time passed, Holly began to worry about Bill and went out into the dark looking for him. Eventually she

heard him yelling for her but it was not to show her a Barred Owl. It was because he had gotten lost! Bill's sections remained some of the best and most consistently covered right up until the time he was taken ill. Bill got people involved with birding outside of the counts as well. He would often take younger birders out and show them some of the best birding spots as well as some great birds. Many have gone on to become outstanding birders.

Brendan Klick, who was raised in Buffalo and cut his teeth as a birder here, was one of those that Bill took under his wing. Brendan wrote:

One of my fondest memories of birding in the BOS region occurred probably about 15 years ago. Bill and I were at Rock Point Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada in August. Bill called out an early Orange-crowned Warbler which I didn't get on. However, we went to Poth Road Turf Farms where we ran into Willie D'Anna and Betsy Potter, who had also seen the Orange-crowned Warbler! We also met Peter Yoerg there, who had seen a Buff-breasted Sandpiper in Fort Erie. Willie, Betsy, Bill and I rushed over to Fort Erie where we all had nice views of the sandpiper!

From Malaysia, Steve Brenner wrote the following:

I just wanted to pass along how Bill was the first person I really birded with from Buffalo and was super helpful and kind to me every time I went out with him. I had just gotten out of school and moved back to the area and did my first CBC in Buffalo with him. I was still pretty fresh and didn't know much about birds in the region, but Bill made the count a great day. I will always remember his devotion to the waterfowl and his signature laugh, which was such a great calling card running into him out birding. He will be missed.

It was not just the youth that became inspired by Bill. Celeste Morien had been a long-time birder who became much more active locally a few years before her retirement. She sent the following:

I will always fondly remember Bill Watson. One of the first times I birded with him, I learned of our mutual respect for Great Egrets. I joined Bill and Jim Pawlicki at Tonawanda State Wildlife Management Area (WMA) to count Great Egrets as they came to roost. I was amazed that Bill could read the tiny numbers on the old red leg bands with his Celestron telescope. Bill was practically giddy at finding numbers that he could report to Chip Weseloh, who headed up the Great Egret banding program in Canada, where most of the banded birds that we saw were from. I caught the egret fever from Bill and met him to escort Chip on Chip's first visit through the myriad swamp locations for egret roosts at Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge and the Tonawanda WMA. On a later occasion, I was able to show Chip the Oak Orchard WMA locations, attempting to be as thorough as Bill. When it was suspected that Great Egrets were nesting

on the Iroquois Refuge, and I mentioned to Bill that the refuge staff had just documented the first nesting, Bill smiled sheepishly, laughed in his characteristic way, and admitted that he had confirmed that already. Enough said!

A few years ago, when a White Ibis was found at a nighttime roost on Tonawanda WMA, since Bill knew exactly where to walk in, my husband and I met him in the late afternoon. We saw the ibis without difficulty and counted all the egrets separately. Somehow, Bill was always able to see a few more birds than I had! By the time we left, it was quite dark. Bill led the way out, since he was smart enough to bring a flashlight. After picking our way back to the parked cars in the pitch black with the aid of Bill's flashlight, through many muskrat and turtle holes in the dike, a DEC officer greeted us. Bill took the lead and explained that we weren't illegally frog hunting, which is what the officer thought. We shared a good laugh about the experience!

Bill cared deeply about all birds, but in addition to the egrets, cormorants, night-herons and raptors on the Niagara River, he was also involved with Cliff Swallows and their protection in his own neighborhood of Tonawanda, NY. On one occasion, I birded with Bill along the upper Niagara River. Bill wanted me to know about the Thompson Street Bridge connecting River Road to Tonawanda Island. He was very concerned about the welfare of the Cliff Swallows nesting under this bridge. He told me that Smith Boys, the boat people on the island, knocked down the nests whenever they wanted. He got involved and at some point got into a verbal altercation with them because I believe he reported their actions to the DEC. He didn't want to park in their lot because they had said if they saw him, they would charge him with trespassing. As a result we had to walk a ways to view the nests from the opposite side of their parking lot. I think it is safe to say that no one had more data or was more informed about the avian life in this stretch of the Niagara River.

For many years, Bill participated in the Oak Orchard Christmas Count for which I am the compiler, among other counts he was loyal to. A few years ago, he told me he wanted to let his area go, so that the younger birders would have a chance to participate. But when I was in a pinch over an area last December, Bill filled in willingly, meeting me in his little red car at 7:15 AM to pick up the paperwork.

Bill will be sorely missed by this birder and certainly by everyone in the birding community who knew him.

Nadine Litwin succinctly wrote about Bill and in so doing expressed the feelings of many who knew him:

I was lucky enough to have done Christmas Bird Counts (Canadian side) with Bill ... he was kind, inclusive, funny, and I will miss him terribly.

Matt Young, who knew Bill mainly through Bill's wanderings for county birds, wrote the following:

The loss of Bill and Jerry Lazarczyk in the last 8 months hurts. My favorite story about the two was back around 2003 when I first started finding Red Crossbills regularly in areas of Chenango County... it was July/August, they met me out in the middle of nowhere in East Pharsalia. We drove around for a few hours and found nothing, came back to one of the first spots, a white spruce plantation, and there we found parents feeding young with uncrossed bills. The white spruce were maybe only 25-35 feet tall...birds were ridiculously cooperative...Jerry pulled out two lawn chairs from the back of his truck and Bill and Jerry proceeded to watch them for a good 45 minutes while sitting in the lawn chairs. It was a fun, cool, successful and funny adventure.

Long-time Kingbird Region One editor and BOS member, Mike Morgante, had a lot to say about Bill but boiled it down to this summary and anecdote:

There is so much to be said about Bill's many contributions to the BOS, but first and foremost, I remember him as a dedicated birder. He went birding frequently, and whether he was on his own or with others, he always kept a list of species and counts. His sightings were submitted to BOS each month with pencil on paper. He never missed a month and I'd be amazed at the numbers of dates he was out birding as much as the many sightings he contributed each month. Bill organized field trips for BOS for many years and he enjoyed attending them also. I recall leading a trip at Tiffi Nature Preserve in early May sometime in the 1990s. I was a little frustrated in not being able to find for the group a Northern Waterthrush that was singing in the thick brush and puddles along Warbler Walk. As I moved the group along I said something to the effect that it wasn't unusual for Northern Waterthrush in that many more of them are identified by hearing their song rather than actually seeing them. Bill quickly chimed in that my statement was only correct for birders who knew the song of the waterthrush. While this was more of a smart aleck comment than anything, he was also correct, and the group had a smile. I remember Bill each time I hear a waterthrush in that same spot at Tiffi, which is almost every spring.

In the last few months while working on a research project, I have had many occasions to look up bird records in the BOS Noteworthy Records Database. Bill Watson's name keeps coming up over and over again. His contributions to the database are enormous. In only thirty years Bill had far and away the most records in the database. His sightings have proved invaluable to my research.

When Betsy Potter and I moved from Wheatfield, just outside of Niagara Falls, up to Lake Ontario in 2004, we rarely went on birding trips with Bill anymore. However, we would sometimes ride with him on BOS field trips. As the BOS field trip chair, Bill felt somewhat obligated to attend. As an occasional

leader I was grateful for Bill's attendance as he would shoulder the responsibility for counting the birds and he frequently found birds that the group wanted to see.

The last chase trip I went on with Bill was in March 2007. Jim Pawlicki went with us. It was a great trip as we got all of our targets and then some—Slaty-backed Gull in Sullivan County, Bullock's Oriole in Ulster County, and Western Tanager and Smith's Longspur on Long Island. On the way downstate Jim was driving and he suddenly pulled onto the narrow shoulder of the Interstate Route 390, yelling "Sandhill Crane!" With huge tractor trailer trucks whizzing by just inches away at 70 mph, Bill and I hurriedly looked from the car for the crane. Just as we spotted the crane and I was thinking, "Good, we can finally get out of here!" Jim found a male Mallard-Northern Pintail hybrid, a form that we had never seen before! Of course, we had to look at that too—all the while I was sweating bullets!

This occasion reminded me of another chase that Betsy and I went on with Bill in November 1987. We were on our way to an area near the Montezuma NWR for a Gray Kingbird when Bill suddenly pulled over onto the shoulder of the New York State Thruway and proceeded to back up! There, only six feet away from us, was a Cattle Egret! And yes, we got the kingbird, too.

Bill was a very active birder up until the time he was taken ill. In his last ten years few people birded with him more than Jim Pawlicki. When Jim first started birding with Bill he was still a beginner, but by the later years, Jim described their birding as "complementary". Bill would take on the more tedious task of counting and keeping track of numbers, while Jim would usually focus more on combing through flocks for rare or uncommon species. Despite the large age difference, they were a great team, turning up numerous rarities for other birders to chase. Jim has shared many fond memories of Bill and had some insightful comments about his personality as well. Jim says that Bill was the most non-judgmental person he has ever met. Unlike most birders, who tend to make judgments of the skill, honesty, and reliability of other birders, Bill pondered the reasons why people acted the way they did. More than anything else, however, he focused on the reliability of his own observations. Jim also describes Bill as one of the most stubborn persons he has ever met. While he found this frustrating at times, he understood that this was who Bill was and what helped make him a great person and contributor to ornithology and conservation. Bill was not going to let the little things stop him from achieving his goals. If he had to lug a 20 pound astronomy scope into the field to read leg bands or watch the herons and egrets from a half-mile away to observe their behavior, to him that was just part of the job.

Bill's passing was relatively sudden. He was in the hospital for only a couple of weeks before the sepsis infection that ravaged his body could no longer be held off. Prior to that, he had been just as active as always. We birded with him on a BOS field trip led by Jim Pawlicki in January. Sudden passings can be a blessing to the person who is leaving this world, limiting the length of

time that they have to suffer. For those who care for them, however, there may not be enough time to fully accept that your friend will no longer be there counting the cormorants, herons, egrets, and eagles at the places you ran into him so many times before. Although we knew Bill was seriously ill, Betsy and I were shocked by his death. We felt certain that his stubborn personality would pull him through and that we would be with him in the field again or reading about his future sightings in the BOS Noteworthy Records or *The Kingbird* Region 1 report. Our sadness will not be relieved quickly but time heals all and eventually we will be left only with the many memories of Bill that made us smile, laugh, or shake our heads in admiration. Bill's many consistent contributions to birding and to ornithology leave a lasting legacy that other birders can strive for. And in one more way, Bill is leading by example.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SEASON—WINTER 2014-15

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Weather for the winter period was remarkably consistent throughout the state. December and the first few days of January were mild, with above average temperatures; snowfall in this period was below average for most of the state, with a few Regions reporting average snowfall. The next eight week period produced record cold for New York State. In the upstate Regions, average temperatures in January were running about 10° F lower than normal, with snowfall ranging from below average to average amounts. February was the coldest month ever recorded in these Regions, with average temperatures 20° to 30° below average, at least 10 days with lows below zero, and snowfall above average. New York City mirrored the conditions upstate, with temperatures in December above average and January and February significantly below average, giving the city its third coldest winter on record. These very cold conditions were set up by a stationary high pressure over the Pacific Northwest which channeled cold air down from the arctic into the Northeastern states. This is in sharp contrast with the nation as a whole, wherein ten of the western states had the warmest winter on record and national average temperatures were above average.

The conditions of this past winter were similar to those of 2013-14, when we had four consecutive weeks of cold fronts passing through the state, all bringing snow, but interlaced with warming periods. This year was worse for the wintering bird population because of the prolonged cold and deep snow. The conditions caused a repeat of the die-off of wintering ducks on the two Great Lakes, and the high snow accumulations beginning in mid January left fields completely covered with no intervals of melting. Several upstate Regions reported well above average numbers of stranded ducks that were emaciated or dying on fields and highways. The wintering hawks and owls that came in December were forced out of the upstate Regions by the end of January. The severe winter conditions of 2013-14 most likely had an effect on the summering populations of less hardy species like Carolina Wrens, and the die-off of ducks in that winter led to lower numbers of ducks in spring. This winter should be expected to further exacerbate those declines.

Although we experienced a very severe winter, weather conditions were generally very favorable for both the CBCs and the State Waterfowl Count. Numbers of half-hardy species were generally near- to below average depending on the Region for the CBCs. Some Regions reported a few migrant species beyond their normal departure dates, but numbers declined by late January. This was not a finch invasion year, probably due to low winter food resources;

Common Redpoll numbers were modest. However, reports of overwintering field birds—Snow Buntings, longspurs, and Horned Larks—were about average.

Cackling Geese were reported in eight Regions, with the highest concentrations in the western part of the state. A maximum of 1-2 Ross's Geese was seen in four Regions, White-fronted Geese were reported in five Regions and Pink-footed Goose was recorded again this winter, in Region 10. A high count of 22 Trumpeter Swans was from the Montezuma area. Brant were seen in Region 5, Harlequin Ducks were reported from three Regions, and Barrow's Goldeneyes from five Regions, including a few reports of females. From Region 5 came a single report of Tufted Duck, which lingered for over a month. Two reports of Eurasian Wigeon were unique to Region 9. Especially notable among the ducks were four hybrids identified to species and one leucistic Redhead, all reported from Region 5. Hybrid ducks have been seen in the state previously but are rarely mentioned by Regional editors. The only report of a Northern Gannet was from Region 9 on 28 December. Black Vultures were present on the Niagara River and in the eastern part of the state.

Golden Eagles were reported as singles from five Regions, but they were seen throughout the winter in Region 9, with a maximum of 2 to 3. There were single reports from four Regions of N. Goshawks. Rough-legged Hawks were present in about average numbers but showed a decreasing trend through February. The high count for Little Gull was three on the Niagara River, and they were reported in only two Regions. A Laughing Gull was in Dunkirk Harbor in late December. Thayer's Gulls were reported in four Regions, all in the western part of the state. Glaucous and Iceland Gulls were in their usual numbers. Very noteworthy for coastal New York were two western North American Mew Gulls (subspecies *brachyrhynchus*), the first for Region 10.

Eurasian Collared-Doves were seen in Regions 1, 2, and 10. Barn Owls in Regions 9 and 10, and a Boreal Owl in Region 8 on 7 February were the only reports of these species. Snowy Owls were present in good numbers throughout the state but fewer than last year's extreme highs. Short-eared Owls were reported from all Regions, with a maximum of 19 south of Rochester. Three Regions reported a single Gyrfalcon; based on descriptions and date overlaps, the reports strongly support two separate birds, one in Regions 2 and 3 and the other in Region 9.

No doubt one of the most unusual reports this winter was of a Crested Caracara first seen in Region 9 at Bear Mountain State Park on 5 January. This bird probably lingered, since it was recorded in nearby Orange County in the spring where it was seen by many. In addition, two other Caracara reports from Region 10 were communicated to the birding community after the fact. A member of South Shore Audubon Society sent photos to Steve Schellenger of a bird seen on 10 January in Seaford, Nassau County, and a homeowner in West Babylon, Suffolk County chatting with birders at Venetian Shores Park months later, told of a Crested Caracara perched in her backyard in January or February, which they had photographed!

The most unusual songbird rarities of the winter were two flycatchers found in Region 10. While a Cassin's Kingbird continued on from fall in Brooklyn, a Couch's Kingbird in Manhattan came to birders' attention on Christmas day. Both lingered for many birders to chase. Blue-headed Vireo was seen on 1 January in Region 3, Townsend's Solitaire appeared for a week in Region 5, and Wood Thrush and Varied Thrush were both reported in Region 8, the latter on 14 February. Warblers were scarce for CBCs except in Regions 9 and 10. A late Yellow Warbler in Region 3 was seen on 3 December, and Orange-crowned Warblers were recorded in three Regions. Among the sparrows, Savannah was seen upstate, where unusual, in Regions 1, 3 and 7. Lark Sparrow was found in Region 8, and one also lingered through most of the winter in Region 2. Fox Sparrows were reported in Region 8 and in Region 5 through February. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks made winter appearances in Regions 3 and 6. Additionally, an immature *Pheucticus* grosbeak in Region 5 was seen at a feeder through 11 January but not identified to species. A Baltimore Oriole in Region 1 seen through 20 December was exceptional, and another occurred in Region 8. Only one Yellow-headed Blackbird was reported this winter, at the same feeder location in Region 2 where they have appeared in previous years. A few later Rusty Blackbirds were also reported, one each from Regions 2, 6, and 8.

This winter produced three exceptionally rare birds, two of them potentially new to New York State, if accepted by NYSARC as first state records. The two kingbirds were certainly exceptional, and many people were able to see them. A few lucky birders saw both in one day. I have to give some recognition to Jacob Drucker and others for identifying the Couch's Kingbird, because this species is not easy to separate from Tropical Kingbird. But I think the truly remarkable and most unique winter find was the Crested Caracara. Kingbirds have long been known to wander, but vagrancy among caracaras is much less familiar.



Iceland Gull with Ring-billed Gulls, Gravesend Bay, Kings 24 Jan 2015, © S. S. Mitra.

REGION 1—NIAGARA FRONTIER

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December 2014 was mild, which made it anomalous from the rest of this winter, including the epic lake effect storms in November. The mean temperature was 33.5° F, 3.4° above normal. Monthly precipitation at Buffalo-Niagara International Airport was 2.15", 1.74" less than usual, with only 11.3" of snow, 16.1" less than usual. January 2015 was cold, with frequent but not heavy snow. A prolonged arctic air mass brought the mean temperature to 20.4°, 4.5° below normal. The monthly precipitation was 2.59", 0.59" below normal, with 25.0" of snow, 0.3" below normal. Precipitation occurred on all but two days in January, and Lake Erie froze on January 9th, about a week ahead of normal. February's mean temperature was 10.9°, a record-setting 15.4° below normal, making it the coldest month on record since data collection started in 1871! It was plenty snowy too, with the third snowiest February on record. The monthly precipitation was 2.40", 0.09" below normal, with 46.2" of snowfall, 28.9" above normal. There is no way to measure it, but birder effort had to be lower than usual in February.

Waterfowl diversity and numbers were down again from the recent averages of past winters, possibly the result of last winter's heavy waterfowl mortality and the continued below average temperatures starting in early January. The juvenile **Ross's Goose** that was initially found at Beaver Island SP in late November lingered through early January when it was likely taken during waterfowl hunting season. A flock of 1,500 **Snow Geese** reported in the town of Warsaw on 4 January was especially notable given the date and location. There were reports of **Harlequin Ducks** from Niagara Falls SP in December and on the upper Niagara River in Buffalo in January and February. At least three individuals, an adult male, immature male, and female, were seen in the vicinity of Squaw Island on the Niagara River in February. The drake **Barrow's Goldeneye** returned for at least its ninth consecutive winter at Point Breeze on Lake Ontario.

An **Eared Grebe** was seen with large numbers of Horned Grebes at Evangola SP on the Lake Erie shore on 22-23 December and was likely the same individual found at this location back on 27 November.

The warm water of Dunkirk Harbor continues to be a major attraction to **Bald Eagles** in late winter, with a maximum of 46 counted there on 22 February. **Black Vultures** were seen again with Turkey Vultures near the

Niagara River in Lewiston for the fourth consecutive winter, although in smaller numbers than recent winters.

Bonaparte's Gull numbers dropped off in late December with the last flocks of the season noted in early January. There were small numbers of **Little Gulls** seen within Bonaparte's flocks on the Niagara River in December and early January. Four **Black-legged Kittiwakes**, including two adults, were seen at Buffalo Harbor during strong southwest winds on 3 December and 1 January. A first-winter **Laughing Gull** appeared at Dunkirk Harbor in late December and spent most of its time scavenging handouts from people feeding the ducks and geese. Large gulls were especially scarce starting in mid-December in the area around Niagara Falls and the lower Niagara River. The only report of **Thayer's Gull** was of two seen at Devil's Hole SP on 21 January.

The Region's third **Eurasian Collared-Dove** was first sighted at the feeders of Charles and Ann Horton in the town of Wilson on 26 December and lingered until 6 January. Given the colonizing habits of the species, it is suspected this may have been the same individual seen and heard by Betsy Potter back in early August at nearby Wilson-Tuscarora SP, although the lack of sightings in the interim certainly leaves open the possibility that different individuals are involved.

Snowy Owls were widespread again this winter, likely the result of many individuals returning to the Region following last winter's large irruption. There were dozens of reports from at least 18 locations, including two in December from Allegany County where notable. The highest concentrations of owls were four from the Dunkirk Airport and Buffalo Harbor and five reported from the frozen Lewiston Reservoir in January. There were few reports of other owls, with Short-eared Owls reported mostly from previously known wintering areas.

Red-headed Woodpeckers were identified in four locations; more than most recent winters. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** is becoming less rare in winter. There were fewer Northern Shrike reports than usual this winter.

Most **Bohemian Waxwing** sightings in Region I are along the Lake Ontario shoreline, thus the two reports from southern Erie County this winter were especially noteworthy. Chris and Pat Marcello reported one eating berries from a tree in their yard in Sardinia on 10-11 January. Linda Holmes was excited to find two Bohemians in with Cedar Waxwings at Majors Park in Aurora on 22 February. Other birders made it there that same morning and pushed the total to six, which ties the maximum count for the Region outside Niagara County.

Savannah Sparrow is rare in winter and is typically not found most years after October. Three sightings this winter was surprising, with one in December and two in January in three distinct locations. **Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco** and **Baltimore Oriole** lingered from locations described in the fall report.

It was not a big winter for irruptive finches. **Pine Siskins** were present in mostly low numbers, with some higher totals near Lake Ontario. **Common**

Redpolls were scattered in very low numbers. One **White-winged Crossbill** was reported at a feeder in Ripley, while Purple Finch numbers were very low.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BeSP – Beaver I SP, ERIE; BufH – Buffalo Harbor, ERIE; BuSP – Buckhorn I SP, ERIE; BWWT – Batavia Wastewater Treatment Plant, GENE; ChauL – Chautauqua L, CHAU; DH – Dunkirk Harbor, CHAU; EVSP – Evangola SP, ERIE; FLC – Forest Lawn Cemetery, Buffalo, ERIE; FMCSP – Four Mile Creek SP, NIAG; FNSP – Fort Niagara SP, NIAG; INWR – Iroquois NWR, GENE/ORLE; LBSP – Lakeside Beach SP, ORLE; NF – Niagara Falls, NIAG; NFSP – Niagara Falls SP, NIAG; NPP – Niagara Power Project on NR, Lewiston, NIAG; NR – Niagara R; OOWMA – Oak Orchard WMA, GENE/ORLE; PB – Point Breeze, ORLE; Tiff NP – Tiff Nature Preserve, ERIE; WoBSP – Woodlawn Beach SP, ERIE.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: 4 Albion ORLE 1 Dec; 2 BWWT 1, 2 Dec; 35 Alabama GENE 14 Dec; 4 PB 21 Dec; Olcott NIAG 26, 27 Dec; Findley L CHAU 28 Dec; max 1500 Warsaw WYOM 4 Jan (JW); 13 Cuba ALLE 24 Jan; DH 16 Feb; more reports Dec-Jan than typical.
ROSS'S GOOSE (R1): juv BeSP 1 Dec - 5 Jan (WW, AH, mob), continuing from Nov, likely taken by hunter in early Jan.
Cackling Goose: 4 Albion ORLE 1 Dec; 3 DH 2 Dec; BeSP 7 Dec; 2 INWR 29 Dec; only reports.

Mute Swan: 4, max 14 DH 17-18 Jan, 20-22 Feb; 2 BeSP 19, 28 Jan; 2 NR Buffalo 8 Feb.
Trumpeter Swan: BeSP 6-14 Dec, 1 Jan (DM, DS); wing-tagged individual from Ontario.
Tundra Swan: 185, max 260 BeSP 30 Dec, 17 Jan; 30 BuSP 7 Feb; 76 Grand I NR 22 Feb.
Wood Duck: Tonawanda NR 14 Dec (MG, GR); Scio CBC 20 Dec; Hamburg-E Aurora CBC 27 Dec; only reports.
Gadwall: 14 Cuba L ALLE 4 Dec; max 94 NF 22 Jan.
Am. Wigeon: 4 DH 6 Jan; 2, 1 Tonawanda NR 15 Jan, 5 Feb; Buffalo NR 18 Feb; only reports beyond Dec.

Am. Black Duck: max 57 BWWT 9 Dec; 41 OOWMA 29 Dec; 23, 20 DH 5 Jan, 8 Feb; 15 Buffalo NR 20 Jan; 17 Fredonia CHAU 11 Feb; 8 FLC 18-28 Feb.

N. Shoveler: max 114, 64, 36 BWWT 2, 5, 14 Dec; 2 St. Bonaventure CBC 14 Dec; 3 Chaul 28 Dec; 4 DH 6 Jan.

N. Pintail: max 34 Cuba L ALLE 20 Dec; WoBSP 15 Jan; 2 NFSP 21 Jan; Buffalo ERIE 25 Jan, 18 Feb.

Green-winged Teal: 2 Cuba L ALLE 7 Dec; BWWT 2-9 Dec, 5, 19 Jan; no Feb reports.

Canvasback: max 1900, 1900 BuSP, Tonawanda NR 6 Jan, 1 Feb; 1000 BeSP 17 Jan; 278 DH 11 Feb; 9 FLC 28 Jan; 5 BWWT 28 Jan; lower numbers on NR than in recent winters.

Redhead: 110, 100 BuH 4 Dec, 6 Jan; max 255 DH 6 Jan; 1, 3 BWWT 18 Jan, 28 Feb; 229 Tonawanda NR 24 Jan; 7 FLC 28 Feb.

Ring-necked Duck: 7 BWWT 9 Dec; 4 DH 21 Jan; 10, 45 BuSP 26 Dec, 6 Jan; 4 Barcelona Harbor CHAU 18 Jan; 18 Grand I NR 22 Feb.

Greater Scaup: 8000, max 9100, 1200 Buffalo NR 19, 25 Jan, 21 Feb; 7200 BuH 20 Jan.

Lesser Scaup: 75, 30 BuH 3 Dec, 13 Jan; 14 Tonawanda NR 20 Jan; 150 Buffalo NR 22 Feb.

Harlequin Duck: f NFSP 8, 24 Dec (WD, JPa, mob); imm m Buffalo NR 25 Jan (WD, JPa, mob); 1-2 Buffalo NR 4-22 Feb (PY, JPa, WW, AH); up to 3 individuals – ad m, imm m, and f – on Buffalo NR in Feb.

Surf Scoter: 3 FNPS 4 Dec; max 14 BuH 12 Dec; 11, 1 Wilson NIAG 20 Dec, 25 Jan; 3, 1, 2 DH 21 Dec, 24 Jan, 22 Feb; 1-2 Buffalo NR 4-8 Feb.

White-winged Scoter: 61 Olcott NIAG 20 Dec; 10-36 PB 12-25 Jan; 11 Buffalo NR 5-8 Feb; 50 FNPS 20 Feb; 40 Lewiston NR 25 Feb; 30 DH 28 Feb; lower than avg numbers on L Ontario.

Black Scoter: 2, 1 DH 5-23 Dec, 22 Feb; PB 19 Jan; 2 BuH 8 Feb; only reports.

Long-tailed Duck: 159 FMCS 28 Dec; 200 Lewiston NR 13 Jan; max 256 PB 20 Jan; Independence ALLE 22 Feb; 95, 242 Buffalo NR 5, 26 Feb (WW, AH).

Bufflehead: max 2000 BuH 4 Dec.

Com. Goldeneye: 350 NFSP 4 Dec; max 1850, 1700 Buffalo NR 19 Jan, 5 Feb.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE (R1): PB 6 Dec, 11, 19 Jan (AG, BM, CS), apparently same male that has wintered here since Dec 2006, seen in both Region 1 & 2.

Hooded Merganser: max 82, 48 DH 23 Dec, 2 Jan; 27 Tonawanda NR 31 Dec; 30 N Tonawanda NR 1 Feb.

Com. Merganser: 40 Oak Orchard CBC 29 Jan; max 1675, 1400 Tonawanda NR 15 Jan, 5 Feb; 1100, 900 Buffalo NR 17 Jan, 5 Feb; 45 FLC 28 Feb.

Red-breasted Merganser: 400 BuH 3 Dec; 500 Squaw I NR 1 Jan; 550 Buffalo NR 5 Feb; 150 PB 7 Feb; low numbers.

Ruddy Duck: max 12, 5 BWWT 1, 12 Dec; 11 Jamestown CBC 14 Dec; Cuba L ALLE 20 Dec; 25, 1-5, 1 DH 22 Dec, 1-24 Jan, 11-28 Feb; 6, 2, 3 BuSP 27 Dec, 4, 6 Jan.

Red-throated Loon: 12 FNPS 4 Dec; max 21 FMCS 28 Dec; PB 19 Jan; 2 BuH, DH, FNPS 22 Feb.

Com. Loon: FNPS 1 Jan; EVSP 3 Jan; Buffalo NR 22 Feb; only reports beyond Dec.

Pied-billed Grebe: Wellsville ALLE 17, 23 Jan (KR); Hinsdale CATT 25 Jan (JR); only reports beyond Dec.

Horned Grebe: 80, 124 DH, EVSP 22 Dec (TL); 11 EVSP 3 Jan; PB 7 Feb; DH 21 Feb; FNPS 22 Feb; few reports past Dec.

Red-necked Grebe: BWWT 2 Dec; BuH 3 Dec; PB 21 Dec; 2 BuSP 26 Dec; 3 FMCS 28 Dec; no reports Jan-Feb.

EARED GREBE (R1): EVSP 22-23 Dec (TL, JPa, WW); likely continuing from late Nov, rare for date and location.

Double-crested Cormorant: 103, max 125 DH 21 Dec, 18 Jan; 6 Tonawanda NR 31 Jan; 2 Buffalo NR 28 Feb.

Great Blue Heron: max 34, 22 Strawberry I NR 4, 25 Jan.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: Strawberry I NR 25 Jan (WD, JPa, mob); only report.

Black Vulture: 4 NF 1 Dec (MS); 7 NF CBC; 3, 2, 1 Lewiston NIAG 11 Jan, 11, 28 Feb (BC, JB, WD, BP), overwintered for at least 4th consecutive year, fewer than typical.

Turkey Vulture: Eagle WYOM 23 Dec (DA); 36 NF CBC 28 Dec; Amherst ERIE 2 Jan (JPe); 3-7 Lewiston NIAG 3-19 Jan (mob); N Tonawanda NIAG 14 Feb (BL); 4 Machias CATT 15 Feb (BM).

HAWKS - LARIDS

Bald Eagle: 6 EVSP 23 Dec; 3 BeSP 6 Jan; 7, max 46 DH 21 Jan, 22 Feb (WW, GV); 4 Tonawanda NR 23 Feb; 5 Lewiston NR 25 Feb; 4 FNPS 28 Feb; also reported from other traditional wintering and breeding areas.

Red-shouldered Hawk: reported from 12 locations; more than usual.
Rough-legged Hawk: max 3 Dayton CATT 25 Jan; fewer than usual.

Am. Coot: max 500. 250, 167 DH 22 Dec, 2, 6 Jan; few reports elsewhere.

Killdeer: last Jamestown CHAU 13 Dec.

Purple Sandpiper: no reports but one above NF in Ont in early January likely found its way to US at some point.

Black-legged Kittiwake: ad, 2 imm BufH 3 Dec (JPa, JM); ad BufH 1 Jan (JPa); ad sightings rare.

Bonaparte's Gull: 1750 BufH 3 Dec; 250 Squaw I NR 1 Jan; absent after first week of Jan.

Little Gull: Yates ORLE 1 Dec; 3 BufH 3 Dec; NPP 27 Dec; DH 1 Jan; 3 Buffalo NR 1 Jan; 1-3 Squaw I NR 1-4 Jan; no Feb reports.

LAUGHING GULL (R1): imm DH 21-25 Dec (KS, WW, JPa, SB, mob), rare.

Herring Gull: max 4000 NFSP 4 Dec; very low numbers on NR starting mid-Dec.

THAYER'S GULL: 2 DHSP 21 Jan (JPa), only report.

Iceland Gull: 2 Cuba L ALLE 20, 22 Dec (TL, RM); 2 Angelica Landfill ALLE 23 Dec (MI); 3 NFSP 4 Jan; 3 DHSP 13 Jan; 2 FNSP 25 Jan; max 4 NPP 21 Feb; Buffalo NR 21-22 Feb; DH 21-28 Feb; fewer reports and smaller numbers than last two winters.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 6, 4 NFSP 4 Dec, 4 Jan; 2 Cuba L ALLE 21 Dec (TL); Angelica Landfill ALLE 23 Dec (MI); 2 BeSP 19 Jan; Buffalo NR 4 Feb.

Glaucous Gull: 3, 2 Cuba L ALLE 20, 22 Dec (TL, RM); Evans ERIE 23 Dec; 3 BeSP 18 Jan; 3 FNSP 25 Jan; 2 Buffalo NR 8 Feb; 2 Lewiston NR 24 Feb; 9 other reports of 1-2, widespread but much smaller numbers than last two winters.

Great Black-backed Gull: 104, 120, max 125 DH 5, 21 Jan, 3 Feb; small numbers on NR.

PIGEONS – PARROTS

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE: Wilson NIAG 26 Dec – 6 Jan (C&AH); third report for Reg.

Snowy Owl: 4 BufH 2, 22 Dec; Cuba ALLE 10 Dec (KSc); 4 Dunkirk Airport CHAU 17 Dec, 7 Jan; Rushford ALLE 19 Jan (KSc); 5 Lewiston Res NIAG 21 Jan; at least 18 other reports; likely many of the same individuals returning after last winter's major irruption.

Long-eared Owl: Arcade WYOM 18 Feb (PF), only report.

Short-eared Owl: Jamestown Airport CHAU 4 Dec (KV); 5 Shelby ORLE 20 Dec, 2-14 Jan (CM); Cambria NIAG 9 Dec, 14 Jan (JW); NF Airport NIAG 10 Dec (JW); DA 11 Jan (MM-C); Alabama GENE 7, 16 Feb (KLL, SB); Hanover CHAU 20 Feb (GV); Royalton NIAG 23 Jan (TA); Porter NIAG 23 Jan (DD); 5 Yates ORLE 25 Feb (MP); mostly regular locations.
N. Saw-whet Owl: no reports.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 1-2 Hamburg ERIE Dec-Feb (MZ, DR); Shelby ORLE 14 Dec (CM); East Aurora ERIE 15 Dec (DV); Orchard Park ERIE 3 Jan (JH); only reports.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: four reported on 4 CBCs Dec; East Aurora ERIE 15 Dec (DV); Amherst ERIE 5 Jan (RS); Forestville CHAU (GV) 10 Jan, 15 Feb; FNSP 15 Jan (DG); Wilson NIAG 22 Jan, 13 Feb (WD, BP), Alexander WYOM 13 Feb (KF); only reports.

Merlin: max 2 NF CBC 28 Dec; reported from 11 other loc..

Peregrine Falcon: reported from 11 loc.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: fewer than usual beyond December.

Com. Raven: 1-2 Tonawanda ERIE thru, established year round at this location; 2 Whirlpool SP NIAG 27 Dec (TO); 2 Buffalo ERIE 9 Feb (DG); Shelby ORLE 13 Feb (CM); continue increasing reports in northern portion of Reg; regular in southern portion of Reg.

Horned Lark: max 150 Wilson NIAG 10 Feb; max 150 Somerset NIAG 11 Feb.

Winter Wren: 2 BeSP 31 Jan (DS), only report beyond CBC season.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: NFSP 27 Dec (SC), only report.

E. Bluebird: well reported on CBCs; max 15 N Collins ERIE 1 Jan (J&KL).

Hermit Thrush: Yates ORLE 1 Dec; Tift NP 1 Dec; 2 LBSP 7 Dec; Wilson NIAG 20 Dec; FMCSP 28 Dec; Buffalo ERIE 2 Jan; Carlton ORLE 8 Jan; more than usual.

Am. Robin: max 150 Olcott 19 Jan.

Gray Catbird: Wellsville ALLE 1 Feb (RA), only report.

Am. Pipit: Jamestown CBC 14 Dec, only report.

Bohemian Waxwing: Sardinia ERIE 10-11 Jan (C&PM); Olcott NIAG 18 Jan (JW); 4 Yates ORLE 7 Feb (JPa); FNSP 8, 10 Feb; 6 Majors P Aurora ERIE 22 Feb (LH); very rare away from L Ontario Plain.

Cedar Waxwing: scarce this winter; only found on two CBCs.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: only two reports Dec – Jan; 9 Wilson NIAG 10 Feb; 2 Forestville CHAU 11 Feb; 5 Somerset NIAG 11 Feb; max 45 Yates ORLE 11 Feb; 2 Alexander GENE 21 Feb.

Snow Bunting: lower numbers Dec & Jan; max 550, 675 Wilson NIAG 11, 21 Feb; 275 Alexander GENE, 330 Bethany GENE 21 Feb.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: Newfane NIAG 22 Dec; Porter NIAG 28 Dec; only reports.

TOWHEES – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: Hamburg-E Aurora CBC 27 Dec; Jamestown CHAU 23 Jan; only reports.

Chipping Sparrow: 2, 1, 1 Wilson NIAG 5, 9, 23 Dec (BP, WD); only reports.

Field Sparrow: 4 Jamestown CBC 14 Dec; last Scio CBC 20 Dec; only reports.

Savannah Sparrow: Newfane NIAG 13 Dec (WD); Clarence ERIE 10 Jan (JM); Alabama GENE 15 Jan (MZ); more reports than usual for winter.

Swamp Sparrow: nine on six CBCs; 3 BeSP 6 Jan.

White-crowned Sparrow: max 21 Wilson NIAG 20 Dec (WD); 15 Bethany GENE 31 Jan

(DB); 12 Carlton ORLE 20 Jan; 18 Sheridan CHAU 26 Feb (GV); reported from five other loc, low numbers.

Dark-eyed “Oregon” Junco: Colden ERIE 20 Dec thru (J&KL!, ph), likely same individual that has showed up at this feeder in previous winters.

Red-winged Blackbird: few winter reports; max 11 Tonawanda ERIE 26 Jan; no definite migrants in late Feb.

Rusty Blackbird: 3 Tift NP 1 Dec; INWR 14 Dec; only reports.

Com. Grackle: Portland CHAU 12 Dec; Oak Orchard CBC 29 Dec; only reports.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 110 Independence ALLE 11 Jan (KR).

BALTIMORE ORIOLE (R1): Forestville CHAU 1-20 Dec (SG), continued from fall.

Purple Finch: only 5 on three CBCs; max 12 Jamestown CHAU 25 Jan.

White-winged Crossbill: Ripley CHAU 1 Feb (MR), only report.

Com. Redpoll: 27 on five CBCs; max 13 Independence ALLE 19 Feb (KR); scattered reports in low numbers.

Pine Siskin: 65 Wilson NIAG 6 Dec; 55 Albion ORLE 12 Dec; 21 on three CBCs; max 85 Carlton ORLE 8 Jan.

Evening Grosbeak: no reports.

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REGION 2—GENESEE

Robert Spahn

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Back to back, another cold and snowy winter, this time weighted strongly to the back end. December started with cold and snow, but soon a Pacific flow brought warmer air, clouds, and rains, with the last half of the month snow-free. It was a gray, depressing time, with 26 days cloudy and the other five partly cloudy. The early cold snap left the bays and ponds near Rochester frozen for the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), but Lake Ontario and flowing water remained open. Temperatures averaged 34.4° F, 4.4° above normal, and precipitation totaled 2.31", 0.32" below normal, with snowfall 16.6", 5.2" below normal.

January continued the cold, gray pattern, with persistent light snow on 25 days after a bit of rain early. Most water other than Lake Ontario was frozen.

Fortunately, south winds just before the annual Waterfowl Count on the 18th blew near-shore ice far out and that day was a good one for counting. Still, numbers for most species were low due to the preceding days of ice cover. January temperatures averaged 19.5°, 5.2° below normal, and precipitation totaled 1.74", 0.67" below normal, with 17.7" of snowfall, 10.5" below normal.

February capped off the winter as the coldest month on record for Rochester (145 years of records). Temperatures averaged 12.2°, 14.2° below normal. Only on the 4th and only for four hours did the thermometer rise above freezing. There were 11 days with lows below 0°, a record number. Record lows were recorded on 16, 20, 21, 23, and 24 February, with the lows of -11° on the 20th and 21st the latest records for double-digit below zero temperatures. Lake Ontario remained largely open, but floating ice would pack nearly solid to the horizon after a couple of days of north winds, only to show open leads quickly when the wind shifted to the south. Persistent snowfall totaled 45.2", 21.5" above normal, though precipitation was only 2.51", 0.56" above normal. Snow cover peaked at 21" on the 15th. It was not a great month for birds or birding, and numbers dropped off for both species and individuals. Only five new species were reported and all were likely winter visitors or residents, not early migrants. In the end, it was the 13th coldest meteorological winter on record, with precipitation less than 10% below normal.

Given the weather notes, the general birding picture was pretty much as expected. The three local CBCs recorded respectable, high-average total species (with count week birds included) and the usual few record highs. With much of the water frozen, the mid-January Waterfowl Count total was low, and both species and numbers dropped in late January through February. Rarities were few and half hardies scarce and decreasing after the CBC searches. It was also not a good season for irruptive species. Yet totals for the months and year to date were very close to their respective 10-year averages.

One of the key groups we monitor in winter is waterfowl and associated waterbirds. This season all of the regularly expected winter species were recorded, though generally at low peak counts and decreasing with time. The late fall waterfowl migration that often stretches into December was poor. An exception was Snow Goose and some of the rare species that we often find loosely associated with them, Greater White-fronted, Ross's, and Cackling Geese. These were all present through December into the first few days of January. Snow Goose set record highs on the Rochester and the Conesus-Hemlock CBCs. Tundra Swan was also record high on the Conesus-Hemlock count. Several of the diving duck species that used to winter largely on Lake Ontario now peak in the Finger Lakes. On the Conesus-Hemlock CBC, record highs were set for Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, and Common Merganser, plus Common Loon and Great Blue Heron. Waterfowl that still peak in substantial numbers on Lake Ontario are Long-tailed Duck, Common Merganser, and Red-breasted Merganser. The state Waterfowl Count on 18 January tallied the second lowest

total in the past 10 years in this Region. Most of the drop to less than half of last year's total came from no Canada Geese below the Mt. Morris Dam and missing diving ducks due mainly to the Finger Lakes and the Lake Ontario bays all being frozen.

Loons and grebes were also found only in small numbers this season other than a few good Horned Grebe counts on Lake Ontario off Wayne County. Rarer waterbirds were: an adult male King Eider found in the Genesee River mouth by Tom Nash on 15 January and seen and photographed by many there or at nearby sites off and on through 24 February; the returning male Barrow's Goldeneye found at Pt. Breeze on 6 December and there through January; other Barrow's Goldeneye reports at Sodus Pt. off and on through January; and the lone immature **Northern Gannet** of the fall photographed by Joe Wing at Sodus Pt. on 12 December and likely the same bird reported as a sulid sp. seen passing along the Lake Ontario shore to the east off the Town of Wolcott by Wade and Melissa Rowley about an hour earlier. By February, none of the rarer geese, few puddle ducks, few Great Blue Herons, and no cormorants were reported.

Raptors provided few highlights this winter. Black Vulture finally showed up again in January and February, with reports from the Millseat Landfill (Town of Riga). Turkey Vulture was also present there in small numbers and set a record high on the Conesus-Hemlock CBC. There were only two Northern Goshawk and three Red-shouldered Hawk reports for the season. Rough-legged Hawk numbers were low and decreased through the season. Among the falcons, American Kestrels were scarce and both Merlin and Peregrine Falcon reports were a bit below recent winters. A major highlight was a gray **Gyrfalcon** photographed at the pier in Charlotte by Zaphir Shamma on 16 February and seen briefly there the next day.

Moving to nocturnal raptors, we tied a record high for Eastern Screech-Owls on the Rochester CBC; Snowy Owls were present in good numbers, though mainly at the Genesee County Airport (Batavia) later in the season; and the DEC enlisted volunteers for biweekly Short-eared Owl counts through the season. The best single locale for Short-eared Owls was near the intersection of Sand and Taft Roads in the Town of West Bloomfield, where the peak count was 19 on 18 January. **Interest in owls brought many to that area and reminded us to be aware of our impact as birders; some neighbors complained of cars parked on a snow-narrowed road, exhaust fumes, and binoculars aimed toward home windows.** Finally, Northern Saw-whet Owls were found in the usual Owl Woods area west of Braddock Bay on 7 February and as a surprise in Palmyra on 26 February. Late February checks did not turn up more at Owl Woods.

Among the shorebirds and gulls, we find only a single shorebird reported, a Purple Sandpiper seen on the piers at Irondequoit Bay Outlet from 19 December to 6 January. Ice on the piers and late waterfowl hunting limited sightings. A Black-legged Kittiwake was seen passing Hamlin Beach SP on 1 December, the only report this season, and the last Bonaparte's Gull reported was on 18

January, a typical date historically. With no open bays to provide ice-edge gathering sites, the larger winter gull reports were hit and miss along the lakeshore or near either the Millseat Landfill in Riga or the High Acres Landfill in Perinton. There were two Thayer's Gulls reported in early January, and Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous Gulls were seen off and on through the season in modest numbers.

Covering the passerines is always a challenge. This time I'll start with the half hardies, sneaking in a couple of non-passerines; good in December to mostly gone by February this winter. There were two Red-headed Woodpecker reports, but none from Hamlin Beach SP. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were present all season in better numbers than in many winters. Four Eastern Phoebe in December is likely a new high for the Region for that month. There were lots of Winter Wrens in Durand-Eastman Park for the Rochester CBC, leading to a record high 22, and 10 were still present in a small corner of the park on 3 January. Carolina Wren also set record highs on both the Rochester and Conesus-Hemlock CBCs. A lone Ruby-crowned Kinglet was found on the Letchworth-Silver Lake CBC. Multiple reports of Hermit Thrush were received in each month, and a Gray Catbird was seen in Webster Park in January. Winter warblers included an Ovenbird photographed by Monika Hermann-Kokis in Henrietta on 27 December and Pine Warblers and Yellow-rumped Warblers in December and January. Also reported were Eastern Towhee found in December and February; a few Savannah Sparrows in January and February; a rare January Fox Sparrow; and Rusty Blackbirds at a feeder in Victor in January and February. The CBCs also tallied some record high passerine counts, with Rochester nearly doubling the old high for Blue Jay, Letchworth-Silver Lake with record high Tufted Titmouse, and on all three counts, White-breasted Nuthatch at near record highs.

Most birders were disappointed with the winter finch numbers; there was no real incursion this winter. Yet many species were reported scattered through the season, with Common Redpoll and Pine Siskin the only species present in numbers and increasing later in February. Still, even those two species were hit and miss for different observers often only separated by short distances. Other reports included White-winged Crossbill in December, Hoary Redpoll—including photos—in December and February, a Common "Greater" Redpoll at the Rowley's feeder in N. Wolcott on 16 February, and four reports of Evening Grosbeak in December.

This leaves a few loose-end records of some interest. Virginia Rail was again found at the usual spot in Mendon Ponds Park from 17 January to a last report on 7 February. Rock Pigeon made the podium with a record high count on the Rochester CBC. Both Eurasian Collared-Dove and Monk Parakeet were again reported from their known locations but only in January. Northern Shrike reports were relatively few and decreased through the season. The Fish Crows usually seen either side of the Genesee River near the mouth were seen off and on all season. There were few Cedar Waxwing reports, so Bohemian Waxwing

at Hamlin Beach SP on 20 December and 1-2 birds in Webster Park (Whiting Road) 7-22 February were surprises. With lots of snow cover, but patches in fields and the road edges swept bare in open country, the winter field birds—Horned Lark, Lapland Longspur, and Snow Bunting—were found, sometimes in good numbers, when birders could get out looking. The rarest passerine of the season was the **Lark Sparrow** continuing from fall in Hamlin Beach SP near Parking Lot 4. It was seen off and on to 24 January when observers would tromp through the snow to that area after the park roads were closed. Finally, there were few reports of blackbird flocks of any large number, but a variable, mixed-species flock in the Town of Rush was accompanied to a feeder area and other sites nearby by a male Yellow-headed Blackbird seen by many from 17-31 January. Even in a tough winter there are interesting things going on in the bird and birding world!

There are a few statistics of potential interest. There were approximately 33,000 eBird records for our Region (after about 25% of the initial download each month was deleted from parts of counties lying outside in other Regions). There were also a bit over 10% more records from the geneseebirds listserv and other private submissions. Also data was utilized from the local CBC summaries and the Region 2 part of the state Waterfowl Count. The number of species seen and (10-year averages) by month were: December – 130 (129.8), January – 128 (128.9), February – 107 (112.9), and total year to date through February – 133 (133.2).

CONTRIBUTORS

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PHOTO GALLERY WINTER 2014-15



Couch's Kingbird, lower Manhattan, *New York*, 26 Dec 2014, © Doug Gochfeld.



Shane Blodgett found two Mew Gulls along the Brooklyn waterfront this winter. Unlike his previous Brooklyn discoveries of Mew Gulls, which pertained to the nominate, European subspecies *canus*, these two were of the western North American subspecies *brachyrhynchus*, the first for Region 10. Above: a first-winter bird at Gravesend Bay, Kings, 21 Jan 2015, © Doug Gochfeld . Opposite: a second-winter bird at Veterans Memorial Pier, Kings, 9 Feb 2015, © Shane Blodgett. See pp. 96-99.





Ross's Goose, Beaver Island State Park, *Erie*, 6 Dec 2014, © Denise Hackert-Stoner.



This cooperative and long-staying goldeneye inspired considerable debate, but was thought by most to be a Barrow's Goldeneye; Moravian Cemetery, *Richmond*, here 8 Mar 2015, © Peter Post.

Kohlenberg, Hans Kunze, Chris Lajewski, Edith Lank, Tom Lathrop, Leona Lauster, Greg Lawrence (GL), Tim Lenz, Chuck Linn, Joan & Vern Lindberg, Paul Lindemann, Peggy Mabb, Mary Magistro, Bill Maier, Melissa Mance-Coniglio, Cindy Marino, David Mark, Pat Martin, Lauri Mattle, Kevin McGann, Jay McGowan, Kevin McGowan, Chita McKinney, Ferne Merrill, Jim Miles, Joyce Miller, Adrielle Mitchell, Joseph Mitchell, Celeste Morien, Roy Morris, Brian & Brooke Morse, Sheila Mumpton, Alan Nash, Ann Nash, Tom Nash, Dave Nicosia, Dave Nutter, Sue O'Neill, Joe Ovsiovitch, Kris Palermo, Michael Palermo, Andrea Patterson, Jim Pawlicki, Carol Phillips, Norma Platt, Betsy Potter, Jay Powell, Dave Prill, RBA Field Trips, Carolyn Ragan, Dave Robertson, Michelle Rosenbaum, Vicki Rothman, Wade & Melissa Rowley, Jesse Rubenstein, Jennifer Rycenga, Livia Santana, Michael Scheibel, Zaphir Shamma, Shirley Shaw, Dominic Sherony, Judy Slein, Tom & Pat Smith, Cathy Spahn, Robert & Susan Spahn, Dave Spier, Kathleen Squires, Chris Stanger, Joseph Stevenson, Kim Sucy, Jim Tarolli, Steve Taylor, Mike & Joann Tetlow, Larry Toole, Matt Voelker, Brad Walker, Mike Wasilco, Bridget Watts, Doris Waud, Dave Wheeler, Kinsley Whittum, Tim Wilder, Joseph Wing, Chris Wood, Martha Zettel.

ABBREVIATIONS

BB – Braddock Bay, T Greece, MONR; CHCBC – Conesus-Hemlock CBC 26 Dec; CL – Conesus L, LIVI; DEP – Durand-Eastman Pk, MONR; H – T Hamlin, MONR; HBSP – Hamlin Beach SP, MONR; IBO – Irondequoit Bay Outlet, MONR; LSLCBC – Letchworth-Silver Lake CBC 20 Dec; MP – Mendon Pond Pk, MONR; NMWMAC – Northern Montezuma WMA, T Savannah, WAYN; PB – Point Breeze, T Carlton, ORLE; RCBC – Rochester Christmas Bird Count 14 Dec; SB – Sodus Bay, WAYN; SPt – Sodus Pt., WAYN; TCEA – Twin Cedars Environmental Area at Avon DEC offices; WP – Webster Pk, MONR.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: 3 Jacobs Rd H 7 Dec (AGu, CGu); 3-5 HBSP 9-27 Dec (mob); last 1 and 4 HBSP 2 Jan (PM and BCI).

Snow Goose: 100 RCBC 16 Dec, CBC record high; 15074 N Sector CHCBC 26 Dec (JD, *et al.*, ph), CBC record high; **max 75000** Poplar Hill Rd Lima 28 Dec (R&SS, CSp, ph); 9000 TCEA 29 Dec (MW); 5000+ Genesco 4 Jan (JK); last 1 CL 5 Jan (KC).

Ross's Goose: 1-2 HBSP 1-21 Dec (AGu, BrIM, mob); 1 Poplar Hill Rd Lima 28 Dec (RS); West Fork Rd H 1 Jan (B&BM); last HBSP area 2 Jan (BCI).

Cackling Goose: 20 rep, 18+ ind 5 loc 1-27 Dec (mob); max 5 at 3 loc 1, 17 Dec; last 1-2 HBSP area 1-3 Jan (mob).

Canada Goose: max 17,197 LSLCBC 20 Dec.

Mute Swan: max 111 SPt 21 Jan; 25 IBO 7 Feb, peak for the month, low.

Trumpeter Swan: max 22 T Savannah WAYN 7 Dec.

Tundra Swan: 151 SB 16 Dec; max 250 CL 26 Dec (JK, AC).

Wood Duck: 1 Bear Creek at Lake Ontario 18, 23 Jan, 22 Feb, only reports after mid Jan.

Gadwall: max 36 CL 18 Jan (MW).

Am. Wigeon: last SB 1 Jan.

Am. Black Duck: max 127 CL 18 Jan (MW).

Mallard: max 2000 near Caledonia 23 Jan; total 4080 Waterfowl Count 17- 23 Jan.
N. Shoveler: last T Penfield MONR 18 Jan (C&JB).
N. Pintail: last 3 Caledonia Fish Hatchery 23 Jan.
Green-winged Teal: 1 Silver L WYOM 3 Jan; 3 Caledonia Fish Hatchery 11 Jan; 1 BB 16 Feb; only reports after Dec.
Canvasback: max 25 SPt 1 Jan, low peak.
Redhead: max 6934 CHCBC 26 Dec, CBC record high; 30 IBO 7 Feb, low peak for Feb.
Ring-necked Duck: max 1500 CHCBC 26 Dec, CBC record high; 17 CL 4 Jan, very low max for Jan; none in Feb.
Greater Scaup: max 150 SPt 3 Feb, very low.
Lesser Scaup: max 340 CHCBC 26 Dec.
King Eider: 1 ad m mouth of Genesee River and nearby sites 15 Jan – 24 Feb, -24 Dec (TN, mob), ad m rare, many ph.
White-winged Scoter: max 100 mouth of Genesee River 18 Feb, low.
Long-tailed Duck: max 872 Genesee River to Braddock Bay 18 Jan (KGr), total 1928 whole Waterfowl Count.
Bufflehead: max 497 CHCBC 26 Dec, CBC record high; only 73 on Waterfowl Count 18 Jan.
Com. Goldeneye: 936 CHCBC 26 Dec, CBC record high; max 1295 Waterfowl Count 18 Jan.
Barrow's Goldeneye: 1 m PB 6 Dec - 19 Jan (mob), present sev winters, moves from the edge of Region 1 to a mile or so east into Region 2; 1 m SPt 18 Dec (JiB, JW, ph, JMi, LL).
Hooded Merganser: max 634 CHCBC 26 Dec, CBC record high.
Com. Merganser: 115 CHCBC 26 Dec, CBC record high; max 364 Waterfowl Count 18 Jan, low total.
Red-breasted Merganser: max 2169 Waterfowl Count 18 Jan.
Ruddy Duck: max 80 CHCBC 26 Dec (JK, AC), all on CL.
Red-throated Loon: max 22 HBSP 9 Dec (AGu); a few rep 1-4 to 19 Jan & 1-2 mouth of Genesee River 18 Feb.
Com. Loon: singles sev loc to 19 Jan & mouth of Genesee River & SB 18 Feb.
Pied-billed Grebe: max 22 CL 3 Dec (AC).
Horned Grebe: 72 off Bear Creek WAYN 20 Dec; 75 SPt 20 Dec; max 100 off Bear Creek WAYN 4 Jan (JW).
Red-necked Grebe: max 17 HBSP 9 Dec, low max; last 1 off T Williamson WAYN 18 Jan.

N. Gannet: 1 imm SPt 12 Dec (JW, ph), only fall rep.
sulid sp.: 1 imm offT Wolcott WAYN 12 Dec (W&MR), *intro*.
Double-crested Cormorant: last IBO 9 Jan.
Black Vulture: 1 Millseat Landfill T Riga 6-31 Jan (BriM, mob), 13 Feb (PM).
Turkey Vulture: 29 CHCBC 26 Dec, CBC record high; 18 Millseat Landfill T Riga 18 Jan (B&BM).

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 5 LSLCBC 20 Dec, count record high; 7 CHCBC 26 Dec, count record high; 20 rep, 27 ind Feb
N. Goshawk: 1 Letchworth SP 20 Dec; H 12 Feb (MT, JCh); only reports.
Red-shouldered Hawk: Chimney Bluffs WAYN 5 Dec (DD); CL Inlet 5 Jan (KC); T Hemlock 17 Jan (SM).
Rough-legged Hawk: total 20 in Dec, 14 in Jan, & 8 in Feb.
Virginia Rail: 1 MP 17 Jan-7 Feb, known winter loc.
Am. Coot: max 544 CHCBC 26 Dec.
Purple Sandpiper: IBO piers 19 Dec-6 Jan (LM, mob), only shorebird for season.
Black-legged Kittiwake: HBSP 1 imm Dec (AGu, BriM).
Bonaparte's Gull: last 1 Genesee River mouth 18 Jan.
THAYER'S GULL: 1 1st win HBSP 1 Jan (AGu, ph, mob); 1 1st win Millseat Landfill T Riga 9 Jan (BriM).
Iceland Gull: approx totals – 3 in Dec, 9 in Jan, & 5 in Feb.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: totals approx – 4 in Dec, 6 in Jan, & 3 in Feb.
Glaucous Gull: totals approx. – 0 in Dec, 13 in Jan, and 9 in Feb.

PIGEONS – PARROTS

Rock Pigeon: max 1840 RCBC 14 Dec, CBC record high.
EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE: 1 BB 2 Jan (BCI); 1 Hamlin (Greenwell farm) 24 Jan (MV), 31 Jan (MS).
E. Screech-Owl: 69 RCBC 14 Dec, ties count RH; 45 CHCBC 26 Dec, good count.
Snowy Owl: ~41 rep, 22+ ind many loc Dec; ~87 rep, 27 ind many loc Jan; ~19 rep, 9 ind sev loc Feb; number of ind cannot be determined accurately, *intro*.

Short-eared Owl: max 19 Sand & Taft Rds, W. Bloomfield 18 Jan (MG); biweekly counts organized by DEC, *intro*.

N. Saw-whet Owl: Manitou (Owl Woods) 7 Feb (TD, ph); T Palmyra 26 Feb (PL), unusual loc.

Red-headed Woodpecker: Seneca P, Rochester 9 Dec (AGa); Fairport 29-30 Dec (WB); only reports.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: 64 LSLCBC 20 Dec, count record high; 169 RCBC 14 Dec, 1 short of count record.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: total 15 ind sev loc scattered thru, very good number for winter.

Am. Kestrel: 7 rep, 6 ind Feb, low.

Merlin: total - 6 all Dec; 7 all Jan; 6 all Feb.

GYRFALCON: gray morph Gcnese River mouth area 16-17 Feb (ZS, ph, sev).

Peregrine Falcon: total - 5 all Dec; 6 all Jan; 5 all Feb.

MONK PARAKEET (R2): 1 Rochester (West Ridge Plaza area) 11, 21, 23 Jan (PM, CSt, SB), keep trying to rebuild nest on cell tower after removals.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: 1 ph Oatka Creek P 2 Dec (JAd);

Fairport 13 Dec (CL); HBSP 22 Dec (DW, JTa); DEP 23 Dec (KGa); many rep for Dec.

Blue Jay: max 508 RCBC 14 Dec, count record high.

N. Shrike: totals approx - 14 in Dec, 6 in Jan, & 4 in Feb.

Am. Crow: max 15,747 RCBC 14 Dec, about half of previous year, effects of hazing efforts?.

FISH CROW (R2): max 5 Rochester

(Charlotte area) 18 Jan (BCI), *intro*

Com. Raven: 6-9 Lima 27 Jan - 1 Feb (sev).

Horned Lark: max 275 T York LIVI 23 Feb (DBea).

Tufted Titmouse: max 99 LSLCBC 20 Dec, count record high.

White-breasted Nuthatch: 111 RCBC 14 Dec; 110 LSLCBC 20 Dec, count record high; 144 CHCBC 26 Dec; very good totals.

Winter Wren: max 22 RCBC 14 Dec, count record high, most in DEP; 10 DEP 3 Jan, still present near Sherry Swamp

Carolina Wren: 19 RCBC 14 Dec, count record high; max 39 CHCBC 26 Dec, count record high.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: LSLCBC 20 Dec, only report.

Hermit Thrush: totals - 10 in De; 4 sev loc 3-25 Jan; 3 sev loc 2-22 Feb.

Am Robin: max 1625 RCBC 14 Jan; 125 Webster P (Whiting Rd) 14 Feb (JMi), Feb max.

Gray Catbird: Beatty Pt, Greece 14 Dec (GL); Hemlock L area 26 Dec (BH); last Webster P 11 Jan (NP); only reports.

Am. Pipit: last CL 6 Dec (JK, RBA Field Trip).

Bohemian Waxwing: 1 HBSP 26 Dec (JMi); 1-2 Webster P (Whiting Rd) 7-22 Feb (GF, mob).

Cedar Waxwing: max 70 Webster P (Whiting Rd) 18 Feb (JMi), scarce.

LONGSPURS – WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: max 100 H 8 Jan (PM).

Snow Bunting: max 1000+ T Kendall ORLE 28 Jan (RS); 450 H 5 Feb (AGu).

Ovenbird: T Henrietta 27 Dec (MH-K, ph), 6th winter record.

Pine Warbler: Spenceport 2-26 Dec (FC), at feeder; HBSP 3 Jan (JMi).

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 1 Hamlin 1, 13 Dec (AGu); max 10 Beatty Pt (Greece) 14 Dec (GL); 2 LeHigh Valley Trail 20-24 Jan (PM, NK); no Feb reports.

TOWHEES – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: 1 Beechwoods SP WAYN 8, 23 Dec (JW); 1 Marengo, T Lyons WAYN 15 Feb (LG).

Chipping Sparrow: 8 eBird rep of 1-4 ind 14-16 Feb, only rep for season, NONE confirmed correct ID.

LARK SPARROW: HBSP thru 24 Jan (mob, ph), continuing from fall near west end of Parking Lot 4, *intro*.

Savannah Sparrow: total 6 sev loc 15 Jan-5 Feb.

Fox Sparrow: 1 CL Inlet 18 Jan (MW), rare in winter.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 420 LSLCBC 20 Dec.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 200 T Rush 31 Jan, low max.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD: 1 ad m T Rush 17 Jan (JPo, MKI), then Jeffords Rd T Rush at feeders 18-31 Jan (mob, ph), 20 eBird rep.

Rusty Blackbird: 1-2 Victor 13 Jan - 24 Feb (BBER), at feeder; 1 Whitbeck Rd T Palmyra WAYN 6 Feb (ph, *fide* DR).

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 250 T Rush 21 Jan (BCI).

White-winged Crossbill: 1 T Ontario WAYN 4-6 Dec (JW).

Com. Redpoll: max 100 T Kendall ORLE 12 Feb (MT, JCh); many reports of 20+ from scattered loc thru, increasing late in Feb.

Com. "Greater" Redpoll (*A.f.rostrata*): 1 N Wolcott WAYN 16 Feb (W&MR).

Hoary Redpoll: Brown Rd T Wolcott WAYN 20 Jan (W&MR, ph); 1 N Wolcott WAYN 12-16, 23 Feb (W&MR).

Pine Siskin: max 90 T Penfield 8 Jan (JMi).

Evening Grosbeak: H 1 Dec (AGu); Rochester 14 Dec (DB); 2 Dalton LIVI 16 Dec (JCI); 1 Letchworth SP Dec.

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REGION 3—FINGER LAKES

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The 2014-2015 winter season was the harshest and longest winter for some time. December started off relatively mild, with a few cold nights early on leading into lows not dropping below the mid 20s F most of the rest of the month. 25 December was the warmest day of the season, with a daytime high of 57° F. The average December temperature was a full five degrees above the long-term normal. January brought a different story, with highs regularly into the teens by the second week and lows in the negative numbers for days at a time. Average January temperatures were nearly seven degrees below the long-term normal. The average high and low across the month were also both over five degrees below normal. Finally, February brought the coldest weather yet, with 14 days under 0° and an average daily low of 0°, 16.5° below normal. Snowfall in February was also above average, while it was below average in January and average in December.

Lingering half-hardies were present in good numbers this season, especially earlier on. Sparrows such as Field Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, and White-crowned Sparrow were all reported in low numbers, and Savannah Sparrows were around in higher numbers and more locations than usual. Other expected non-winter birds included Eastern Towhee, Gray Catbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Winter Wren, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, and American Pipit. Non-passerines included a few reports of Wood Duck, Northern Shoveler, Wilson's Snipe, Bonaparte's Gull, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. More noteworthy half-hardies included a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** coming to a feeder near Dryden Lake, a **Yellow Warbler** in Ithaca in early December, and an **Orange-crowned Warbler** on the Ithaca Christmas Count on 1 January. Most notable of all and also on the Ithaca Christmas Count was a **Blue-headed Vireo** seen by Bob McGuire, a truly exceptional record for this species.

The early months of 2015 proved to be another awesome season for *Aythya* ducks on Cayuga Lake. A male **Tufted Duck** was found at the south end of the

lake on 17 January, conceivably the same bird that was around in the same area last winter. This bird continued to be seen in the same general area throughout the season and into March, at which point two individuals may have been present. In the same flock as the Tufted Duck, the *Aythya* hybrids outpaced even last year's amazing diversity. This winter, Canvasback x Redhead, Redhead x Ring-necked Duck, Redhead x scaup, and Ring-necked Duck x scaup were all recorded, as well as an ivory-colored leucistic Redhead also present last winter. Other noteworthy birds on Cayuga Lake included a rare-in-winter Black Scoter and an Eared Grebe that made its annual appearance in Ithaca and later in Aurora.

Winter gull numbers were good but unremarkable across much of the Region. Parts of Cayuga Lake and especially the waterfront at the north end of Seneca Lake had good concentrations that included Glaucous Gulls, Iceland Gulls, and a handful of Lesser Black-backed Gulls, perhaps fewer of the last than in recent winters. Two different first year **Thayer's Gulls** were photographed at the Cornell Compost Facility near Ithaca in January, and hybrids of Herring x Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring x Glaucous Gull, and Herring x Great Black-backed Gull were all reported. In addition to the gulls, a **Black Vulture** made a brief appearance at the compost on 20 December.

On the heels of last winter's amazing Snowy Owl show, this winter turned out to be just as rewarding, with dozens of Snowy Owls hanging around throughout the Region. The first of these were reported even before the season began and many lingered well into the spring season. While observers were out looking at owls, some were lucky enough to come upon a gray-morph **Gyr Falcon** that showed up several times in the same area south of Seneca Falls in Seneca County at the end of January and into February.

Winter finches were present in small numbers, with many reports of small flocks of Common Redpolls in January and February, as well as small numbers of Pine Siskins and a single report of an Evening Grosbeak. There were no reports of crossbills or Pine Grosbeaks.

In total, 133 species were reported in the Region during the winter season.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

Aurora – Aurora Bay, CAYU; Bluegrass – Bluegrass Lane, Ithaca, TOMP; CLSP – Cayuga Lake SP area, CAYU; Compost – Cornell University Compost Piles on Stevenson Rd., TOMP; EShore – East Shore P, Ithaca, TOMP; FLNF – Finger Lake National Forest, SCHU/SENE; Geneva – Geneva, especially Seneca Lake SP, SENE/ONTA; Knox-Mar – Knox-Marcellus Marsh area, Montezuma NWR, SENE (includes Towpath and East Roads); Mucklands – Savannah Mucklands, SENE; MyPt – Myers Point, Lansing, TOMP; PortPt – Portland Point, Lansing, TOMP; SaW – Sapsucker Woods, TOMP; SEnd – southern end of Cayuga L, TOMP; StP – Stewart P, Ithaca, TOMP; UnSp – Union Springs, CAYU.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Ross's Goose: 3 StP 14-15 Dec; SaW 8 Jan (CW).

Cackling Goose: many reports throughout season.

Tundra Swan: max 1700 Cayuga Lock CAYU (TL), high but not unusual concentration for the Region.

Gadwall: max 158 UnSp CAYU 31 Jan (JM, LSa).

Wood Duck: Auburn 4 Jan, 7-27 Feb; Waterloo 6 Feb; Canandaigua 26 Jan, 6-16 Feb; uncommon in winter.

N. Shoveler: max 6 Lamoka Lake SCHU 20 Dec (TL).

N. Pintail: max 100 Mucklands 23 Dec (GK).

Canvasback: max 500 UnSp 31 Jan (JM, LSa).

Redhead: max 25000 StP 17 Jan (KM).

CANVASBACK X REDHEAD (HYBRID):

EShore 1-11 Feb, possibly same bird as last winter.

REDHEAD X RING-NECKED DUCK (HYBRID): SEnd 18 & 24 Jan; UnSp 30 Jan (JM, LSa)

TUFTED DUCK: Hog Hole 17-24 Jan; MyPt 21-28 Feb; third Regional record.

REDHEAD X SCAUP SP (HYBRID): SEnd 24 Jan, 7 Feb.

RING-NECKED DUCK X SCAUP SP (HYBRID): SEnd 18 Jan – 8 Feb.

Surf Scoter: SLSP 6 Dec; 2 MyPt 28 Feb, uncommon in winter.

White-winged Scoter: max 70 Aurora 21 Feb.

Black Scoter: max 7 EShore 21 Dec (GK); SEnd 14 Dec – 28 Jan; LoPt 21 Feb; rare in winter.

Ruddy Duck: max 50 Canandaigua ONTA (MG).

Red-throated Loon: sev reports from Seneca and Cayuga Lakes 11 Jan – 5 Feb, uncommon in winter.

Red-necked Grebe: max 17 PortPt 26 Feb (JM).

Eared Grebe: SEnd 15-21 Dec; Aurora 11-31 Jan; rare but annual on Cayuga Lake.

Black Vulture: Compost 20 Dec (GM).

HAWKS - LARIDS

Golden Eagle: Caroline TOMP 4 Jan (SKe), rare in winter.

N. Goshawk: FLNF 14 Jan (JS); Monkey Run TOMP 13 Dec & 24 Jan (CW, JB).

Sandhill Crane: max 84 Knox-Mar 5 Dec.

Wilson's Snipe: Bluegrass 26 Dec (TS), rare in winter.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 3 CLSP 13 Dec (TL), uncommon in winter.

THAYER'S GULL: Compost 20 Jan & 27 Jan, different birds.

Iceland Gull: max 5 Geneva 3 Feb (DW, JT).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: many scattered reports, fewer than in past winters.

Herring x Lesser Black-backed Gull: Geneva 31 Jan (TL, BW).

Glaucous Gull: max 4 Geneva 21 Feb (TL, GW).

Herring x Glaucous Gull (hybrid): Compost 25 Jan (JM, LSa); Geneva 21 Feb (TL, GM).

Herring x Great Black-backed Gull (hybrid): many reports of a single bird, Compost and SEnd, 2 Dec – 14 Feb.

PIGEONS - PARROTS

Snowy Owl: many individuals overwintering.

Short-eared Owl: max 7 Shortsville Rd. ONTA (BMo).

N. Saw-whet Owl: Ithaca City Cemetery TOMP 14 Dec (TL); Ellis Hollow TOMP 22 Dec (EE); Monkey Run 1 Jan (GK).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: at least 16 different locations in area, usually very uncommon in winter.

GYRFALCON: Canoga area SENE 29 Jan, 22-24 Feb, probably all the same gray-morph bird.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

BLUE-HEADED VIREO: Hanshaw Rd. TOMP 1 Jan (BMe), extremely rare in winter.

Winter Wren: multiple reports thru, very uncommon in winter.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: PortPt 1 Jan (KM), very uncommon in winter.

Hermit Thrush: six reports thru, very uncommon in winter.

Gray Catbird: Brooktondale TOMP 1-2 Jan; UnSp 8 Feb (TL, GM), rare in winter.

Am. Pipit: Knox-Mar 11 Dec (WR, MR), uncommon in winter.

LONGSPURS – WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: max 22 King Ferry CAYU 8 Feb (JM, LSa).

Snow Bunting: max 550 King Ferry CAYU 8 Feb (BVD, BF, BB).

Orange-crowned Warbler: Cayuga Inlet, Ithaca TOMP 1-4 Jan, rare in winter.

YELLOW WARBLER: Downtown Ithaca TOMP 3 Dec (BE), rare in winter.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: four reports, uncommon in winter.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: Brooktondale TOMP 1-3 Jan, fairly rare in winter.

Chipping Sparrow: Canoga SENE 13 Dec (TL), Eastern Heights TOMP 24 Jan thru, rare in winter.

Field Sparrow: 2 MyPt 24 Jan (CW, JB), fairly rare in winter.

Savannah Sparrow: max 7 Bluegrass 21 Dec (KR), exceptional numbers and locations, uncommon in winter.

Fox Sparrow: Ellis Hollow TOMP 8 Dec (NM), fairly rare in winter, perhaps a late migrant.

White-crowned Sparrow: at least 10 reports, uncommon in winter.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: Dryden Lake TOMP 6 – 14 Dec (NI), very rare in winter, f-type.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 100 Montezuma, very high for winter.

E. Meadowlark: Brooktondale TOMP 15 Dec (SF); Shortsville Rd ONTA 23 Jan (MP), fairly rare in winter.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 52 Summerhill CAYU 31 Jan (GK), high for winter.

Com. Redpoll: max 62 Ellis Hollow TOMP 24 Feb (EI), many reports, low numbers.

Pine Siskin: max 20 Pine City CHEM 15 Feb (BD).

Evening Grosbeak: Ithaca Airport TOMP 7 Feb (WH), only report.

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REGION 4—SUSQUEHANNA

No report was received this season.

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REGION 5—ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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It seems the harsh winter we experienced last year was only a dress-rehearsal for this winter. Persistent snow and ice cover as well as prolonged periods of arctic cold characterized the season and proved a challenge for birds and birders alike. It's hard to fathom now, but the period actually began on a more moderate note. The average temperature in Syracuse in December was 32° F, which is 2.7° higher than normal. The total snowfall for the month was 17.5", which was 15" below average. By January, temperatures plummeted. In Syracuse the average temperature for the month was 17.3°, which is 6.3° cooler than normal. The lowest temperature in the city was gauged at -11°, which occurred on 14 January. In the Region's higher elevations and rural valleys much lower temperatures were recorded, but even in the city there were 10 days in which the mercury fell below zero during the month. Snowfall for January was around 18", or close to half the average, but since there was never a thaw, any snow that fell remained on the ground for the duration. February was by far the most extreme month of the period. The average temperature was only 9°, a remarkable 16.9° lower than normal! In February there were 15 days when the temperature dipped below 0°. The lowest temperature recorded in Syracuse was -18°, which occurred on 24th of the month. Again, even lower temperatures were recorded in other parts of the Region. Sixty inches of snow fell in Syracuse in February, which is 34.7" above average. The greatest total for a single snowfall event in a 24-hour period was 9.6", which fell on 1-2 February. No thaw came as snow depth increased in many areas to over 3 feet.

Most of the Region's lakes were largely open through the CBC period. This made for some nice high tallies and decent waterfowl diversity on some Christmas Bird Counts. An exception was Skaneateles Lake, where Ken Burdick reported that both numbers and diversity were down from previous years. By the time of the Waterfowl Count (17-25 January), most of the Region's lakes were close to or completely frozen (though Skaneateles Lake didn't completely freeze

over until 11 February). Much of the waterfowl retreated to the rivers where some notable concentrations developed. By February, the Seneca River at Baldwinsville hosted a fair number of dabblers and divers. Stunned minnows passing over the spillway attracted mergansers and gulls. For the second year in a row the complete freezing of virtually all the Region's major bodies of water led to the death of an undetermined amount of fish-eating waterfowl. While claims of large numbers of dead ducks accumulating around the Lake Ontario shoreline couldn't be confirmed, what is indisputable is that beginning in February, a well above average number of diving ducks and grebes were being found stranded along roadsides, in parking lots, and in fields. Of the birds brought to wildlife rehabilitators, most were determined to be emaciated. Species rescued included: Redhead, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Common Loon, Horned Grebe, and Red-necked Grebe.

But it wasn't just waterfowl that were getting into trouble; many raptors were also having problems finding prey. Deep snow allows rodent prey to remain hidden in tunnels systems. Hunger compelled many hawks and owls to perch along roadsides and wait for prey to emerge from snowbanks—or they sought roadkill. Too often, these raptors were being struck by vehicles while trying to secure food. At least 12 Barred Owls, almost all in February, were brought in to two of the Region's rehabilitation centers. Most were plucked out of roads and were subsequently found to be emaciated. About six E. Screech-Owls were also rescued. Most of those were found in weakened states, perched in yards—reportedly oblivious to the activities of humans and domestic animals. At his Waterville property, Bob Williams reported that a Northern Saw-whet Owl, which had been actively hunting around a feeding station during the day (likely a sign of desperation), was snatched in flight by a Cooper's Hawk! Unsurprisingly, given relentless arctic conditions, there was no perceptible flow of early migrants coming into the Region in late February.

On 6 December a half dozen **Greater White-fronted Geese** were found in a cornfield in the Town of Van Buren. The next day they were relocated in a nearby park, where five Cackling Geese were also present. In February two Trumpeter Swans were observed on the Seneca River in Baldwinsville. Unlike the handful of others found in the Region, these birds lingered for the duration of the period. At Fair Haven, a good maximum count of 90 Gadwalls was reported on 16 December. Black Ducks seemed more plentiful than normal on the Region's rivers and creeks, where they sometimes even managed to outnumber Mallards. Redhead tallies were generally good, particularly at Onondaga Lake, Oswego Harbor, and Baldwinsville. In fact the maximum number for Redheads (300) surpassed the high counts for all the other diving ducks except Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, and Common Merganser. Canvasbacks, often completely missed in recent times, were reported in a few places albeit in small numbers. For the second winter in a row a **Harlequin Duck**, this time a female, was found in the Region. On 23 February, Josiah

LaCelle discovered and photographed the rarity, which was fishing in a piece of open water beneath the dam at Delta Lake. Despite its reputation for drawing in Bald Eagles, this location attracts few birders at this time of year; or at least few that report their sightings. On the Oswego River in Phoenix, Gregg Dashnau found a female **Barrow's Goldeneye** on 23 January. On the 31st, David Wheeler contributed a second female and both remained for the balance of the period. On 15 December a maximum of six Horned Grebe was counted on Onondaga Lake. In February, five were found stranded in various places around the Region and were brought to local wildlife rehabilitators. A maximum number of eight Red-necked Grebes was observed on Onondaga Lake on 14 December. In February, four came to rehabilitation centers after they too were found stranded. The majority of the rehabilitated grebes survived to be released. Numbers of wintering Great Blue Heron were down this winter, which is not surprising given the lack of open water. This period no Black-crowned Night- Herons were found at the Onondaga Lake Creek Walk, which is understandable given the harsh weather.

Several Turkey Vultures wintered in the greater Syracuse area, but Tony Shrimpton thought the numbers were down at the traditional location in the Fayetteville area. A few Golden Eagles graced the area this season, including at least one adult observed in Cazenovia on 8 December by Barbara and Larry Hall. Bald Eagles were relatively plentiful again this winter, and there were notable concentrations in expected areas. Sean Lanigan observed a pair of adults adding materials to a presumed Red-tailed Hawk nest in Oriskany on 18 January. One and sometimes two adult Northern Goshawks (presumed pair) were seen regularly in the Southern Highlands of Madison County near Sheds. There, Linda Salter keeps close tabs on local raptors and on the multitude of songbirds that frequent her well-stocked feeding stations. Red-tailed Hawk numbers were good this winter, though low temperatures and deep snow caused higher than normal mortality in their ranks. On 28 February, a juvenile female Red-tail found in Oriskany Falls was brought to Kindred Kingdoms Wildlife Center (KKWC) in Pennellville. Rehabilitator Jean Soprano treated the bird for frostbite in both feet. As of this writing the hawk is expected to recover and be released. Another Red-tailed Hawk brought to KKWC had been discovered caught in a leghold trap in Manlius. The raptor was no doubt attracted to the trap by its bait. Though the incident was reported to the appropriate authorities, no investigation was initiated by State or Federal wildlife agencies. Is it too much to ask that the laws protecting raptors be enforced? Rough-legged Hawks wintered in the Region but not in good numbers. Through most of the season, birders were lucky to find lone individuals even in Herkimer and Oswego Counties, where multiples are more expected.

Early in the season gull activity was marginally good around Oneida Lake and at the Madison County Landfill. While traditional gull hotspots on the Oswego River were unproductive, Onondaga Lake and especially the Seneca River at Baldwinsville became the most reliable locations to find gull diversity.

Iceland and Glaucous Gulls of all ages were seen at the spot, but Lesser Black-backed was noticeably hard to come by. The main highlight came on 18 February when David Wheeler found an adult **Thayer's Gull** at Baldwinsville. The bird was extensively photographed both perched and in flight but seen only one day. Species status of Thayer's is often considered uncertain, but Wheeler performed extensive research using Olsen & Larsson's *Gulls of North America, Europe, and Asia* and Howell & Dunn's *Gulls of the Americas* to document the field marks. Ignoring taxonomic issues, these references describe adult Thayer's as Iceland-like in structure with a small, rounded head, small bill, and eye often appearing closer to the middle of the head than on Herring. The bird is similar in size to Kumlien's Iceland and thus obviously smaller than any but a very few small Herrings. Back and wing color, as with the Baldwinsville bird, should be as dark as Herring if not a touch darker, and never lighter. The eye averages darker than Kumlien's and folded wingtips on perched birds usually show 50/50 black/white marks on the outer primary tips. The actual outer primary tip pattern, as seen from above, varies in Thayer's from Herring-like to Kumlien's-like, but if the bird can be separated from Herring on size and structure and overall impression of wingtips, then the following helps distinguish it from Kumlien's. Dark markings on the primary tips of Thayer's should be black or nearly so, rather than gray or dark gray. P10 may have a complete dark subterminal bar, or it may be partial, or just a hint as the pattern becomes more like Kumlien's (which should have no subterminal mark on P10). P5 should also be unmarked on Kumlien's, but marked in some way on Thayer's. Thayer's, with obvious markings on P5 and P10 should be safely separable from Kumlien's; more vague marks are at the Kumlien's end of the spectrum and may be hybrids especially if combined with other ambiguous features.

Primary tips on the Baldwinsville bird are clearly black, but the P5 and P10 marks, while present, are vague, putting it at the Kumlien's end of the spectrum. The case for Thayer's is also strengthened if the mirror on P9 is limited to the inner vane of the feather, rather than crossing the shaft and to the outer edge. Nonetheless, Thayer's on the Kumlien's end of the spectrum are shown in references with the mirror crossing, and this is the case with the Baldwinsville bird. All things considered, Wheeler concluded the bird a Thayer's Gull and presented his analysis and photos on Flickr. It's impossible not to appreciate the contribution of digital photography, as years ago this difficult ID might have hinged on trying to evaluate small differences in wingtip pattern under field conditions.

Snowy Owls were a presence in the Region this winter, but nothing close to the numbers seen during last year's historic invasion. On New Year's Day a maximum of three were found at Hancock Airport, and a few days later three were seen at Oswego Harbor. But for the most part, only single birds were found in typical locations. Particularly as the season wore on, Snowys became more elusive and in February, as the snow cover became deeper, sightings fell off precipitously. There were two reports of Long-eared Owls—one at Beaver Lake

Nature Center on 21 December and one near the shore of Onondaga Lake on 10 February. An Ornithology Class from SUNY-ESF is responsible for locating the latter bird. One might fairly ask what the bird was doing at such an unusual spot. Good numbers of Short-eared Owls were tallied in two locations. On 19 December, Brenda Best found nine in a traditional hotspot for the species in Durhamville. In Southern Herkimer County, not far from Fort Plain and the Montgomery County line, seven Short-eared Owls were observed on 2 January. Perhaps due to increasing snow depth, no Short-eared Owls were found anywhere in the Region after the first day of February.

No Red-headed Woodpeckers were reported during the period. Data from the Oswego-Fulton CBC indicates the Red-bellied Woodpecker population is continuing to increase in that area. There were five reports of individual Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers overwintering. Through most of February, a female sapsucker was reported frequenting a suet feeder at a residence near Otisco Lake. In the Adirondacks a single Black-backed Woodpecker was found by Gary Lee during the week of the Old Forge CBC. Unfortunately the bird eluded him on the actual count day, 14 December. The numbers of American Kestrels and Merlins reported in the area were identical—16 each. Peregrine Falcon pairs in both Syracuse and Utica held their respective territories through the season, while transients were reported in Phoenix, Baldwinsville, and Dolgeville. One juvenile *tundrius* Peregrine spent a few weeks, 20 December-9 January, in the Village of Clinton. The small community lacks the typical geography, both natural and man-made, and food supply one expects would be a prerequisite for keeping a Peregrine interested for an extended period, but evidently the bird saw it differently. The unusual visitor didn't go unnoticed by local media, and its picture was featured on the front page of the local paper.

Northern Shrikes were observed in approximately 16 locations, but like this season's Rough-legged Hawks and Snowy Owls, "butcher birds" were elusive and most birders never got to see one. Very few were found in February. In January at least 20 American Crows and one Blue Jay were discovered dead or dying at Spring Farm Nature Preserve in southern Oneida County. Pathologists working for the State determined that the birds had been poisoned. It was speculated that they had ingested poison feed laid out for European Starlings, but to date, the precise circumstances of this incident were never investigated. Again we are forced to ask what use is it to have strict laws protecting birds if little or no effort is made to enforce them?

Fish Crows were found in their usual haunts at Onondaga Lake. The species was also seen and heard in Little Falls, which, when taken together with a prior sighting in the same vicinity, may suggest the presence of a new colony. A continued range expansion by Common Ravens is indicated by some of the Region's CBC data, with Syracuse, Clinton-Utica, and Oneida all reporting record highs for the species. No significant influx of Red-breasted Nuthatches was evident during the period; food reserves were likely insufficient for their needs. Harsh weather meant a tough winter for half-hardy songbirds. At

Carpenter's Brook Fish Hatchery in Elbridge, Ken and Rose Burdick located a few half-hardy species throughout the winter including Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Hermit Thrush. Ken turned up a Wilson's Snipe on 22 February, but it did not continue at the original wet seep. A Marsh Wren found by Dave Nash at the Clay Marsh was a nice addition to the Syracuse CBC's tally, where it was dubbed "bird of the count". A **Townsend's Solitaire**, originally located by Brian White at his Erieville property, was the Region's best find for the fall period, and since it carried over, it may also be considered the best bird for winter. The rarity continued through the first week of December, though it remained elusive and was not seen after an abrupt change to winter weather. The number of American Robins that wintered in the Region was way down from recent years. Even in some areas that purportedly had good crops of wild grape and buckthorn berries, the flocks were small.

A maximum of 13 Yellow-rumped Warblers was found at Rice Creek Field Station on 28 December. A handful of others was found in the Region but none after New Year's Day. Single Fox Sparrows didn't persist long at bird feeders in Williamstown or Waterville, but two managed to hold on all the way through February at Linda Salter's feeders in the Southern Highlands. Even with a photograph in hand, the authors weren't able to definitively identify the grosbeak species that made sporadic visits to a Syracuse yard as a holdover from the fall period. A photo taken by the homeowners shows what may be a juvenile male Rose-breasted Grosbeak, but possibly a Black-headed Grosbeak. Additional pictures would have been helpful, but the unpredictable visits of the bird made obtaining them impractical.

This was not a finch invasion year; the Region lacked the food resources to host Pine Grosbeaks or crossbills. However, in the Town of Marcy on 20 December, we did get a single credible report of three Pine Grosbeaks on a roadside, presumably gritting. Almost two decades earlier, not far from this same area, the presence of wintering flocks of Pine Grosbeaks feeding on the seeds of White Ash trees growing along the Mohawk River was not that unusual. Common Redpolls arrived in the Region on the day after Christmas. They appeared at some area bird feeders in small flocks which increased only modestly during the course of the season. Pine Siskins were present in small numbers throughout the period. As was the case in fall, Evening Grosbeaks were represented only at a few of their traditional wintering areas in the Southern Highlands, Adirondacks, Adirondack Foothills, and Tug Hill.

A total of 126 species was found this period, which is four less than the most recent decade's average. The highlights included: **Greater White-fronted Goose**, Cackling Goose, **Harlequin Duck**, **Barrow's Goldeneye**, Turkey Vulture, Red-shouldered Hawk, **Golden Eagle**, **Wilson's Snipe**, **Thayer's Gull**, Lesser Black-backed Gull, **Snowy Owl**, Long-eared Owl, Short-eared Owl, N Saw-whet Owl, **Marsh Wren**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, **Townsend's Solitaire**, Gray Catbird, Rose-breasted/Black-headed Grosbeak, Fox Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, and Pine Grosbeak.

The winter season produced 25,948 eBird records which were processed by Swan Swan Hummingbird v4.02.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BLNC – Beaver Lake Nature Center, Baldwinsville; Bville – Baldwinsville; Canas – Canastota; Caz – Cavenovia L; CM – Clay Marsh, Clay; Const – Oneida L at Constantia; DB – Ditch Bank Rd & vicinity, T Sullivan/Lenox; DH – Derby Hill, T Mexico; Dvl – Durhamville; FH – Fair Haven, Little Sodus Bay, and vicinity; GLSP – Green Lakes SP, Fayetteville; Hast – Hastings; HI – Howland Island WMA; MCL – Madison County Landfill, T Lincoln; OF – Old Forge; OLC – Onondaga Lake Creekwalk; OneiL – Oneida L; OnonL – Onondaga L; OswH – Oswego Harbor; OtisL – Otisco L; RCFS – Rice Creek Field Station, Oswego; SFNS – Spring Farm Nature Sanctuary, Kirkland; SH – Southern Highlands of ONON & MADI; Skan – Skaneateles; SSSP – Selkirk Shores SP; Syr – Syracuse; TR – Three Rivers WMA, Lysander; WP – Woodman Pond, Hamilton.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: arr & max 6 Van Buren 6 – 8 Dec (JB, mob); good number.

Snow Goose: 3015 Syr CBC 20 Dec; 3000 Bville 27 Dec; max 3100 Skan 4 Jan; 2620 Oswego-Fulton CBC 15 Dec.

Brant: max 2 OswH 3 Dec; OnonL 9 Dec; only reports.

Cackling Goose: 4 Tuscarora Lake (DWe, mob); max 5 Van Buren 7 Dec (KMg, JM); 2 Oswego 9 Jan (WF); 2 other reports of singles.

Canada Goose: 3657 Syr CBC 20 Dec; max 3500 Skan 1 Jan.

Mute Swan: 14 FH 1 Dec; max 15 OLC 20 Jan; lower numbers tallied especially at FH.

Trumpeter Swan: max 2 FH 1 Dec (GD), 2 OneiL 20 Dec (DW), 2 Bville 2 Feb thru (mob); most sightings from Bville.

Tundra Swan: 13 FH 1 Dec; max 90 Phillips Point 8 Dec; 43 DH 24 Jan.

Wood Duck: 2 Volney 14 Dec; max 3 New Hartford 21 Dec; 2 Fulton 18 Jan; 2 Oswego 4 Feb; singles at 6 other locs.

Gadwall: 10 WP 4 Dec; max 90 FH 16 Dec, good number; 8 Oswego River 16 Jan; 8 GLSP 23 Jan.

Am. Wigeon: max 45 FH 1 Dec; 20 WP 4 Dec; a few other reports thru 21 Jan.

Am. Black Duck: 53 Cazenovia 30 Dec; 80 Bville 18 Jan; max 84 Herkimer 28 Jan; relatively good numbers on rivers.

Mallard: 385 WP 24 Dec; max 509 OswH 18 Jan; 440 Bville 6 Feb.

Am. Black Duck x Mallard: singles at 7 locs.

N. Shoveler: singles Tully, Bville, Port Byron, SSSP; last Bville 24 Jan.

N. Pintail: max 30 FH 1 Dec; 9 WP 19 Dec; last 9 Richfield Springs 23 Jan; small numbers at 3 other locs.

Green-winged Teal: Lake Moraine, MADI 25 Dec; last 2 Fabius 25 Jan; one other report.

Redhead: max 300 OnonL 14 Dec, 300 OswH 11 Jan; 107 Bville 18 Jan, widespread reports.

Canvasback: first OswH 8 Jan; 5 OnonL 10 Jan; max 10 OswH 11 Jan; 7 Skan 18 Jan; 5 Brewerton 27 Feb.

Ring-necked Duck: 43 Tuscarora Lake 3 Dec; max 50 WP 4 Dec; 30 Bville 12 – 22 Feb.

Greater Scaup: 60 Oswego 14 Dec; max 900 Brewerton 17 Dec; 56 OnonL 20 Dec; 150 OswH 27 Feb.

Lesser Scaup: 15 OnonL 27 Dec; max 20 OswH 18 Jan; 15 Phoenix 28 Feb.

Greater/Lesser Scaup: max 200 Phillips Point 8 Dec, 200 Oswego 16 Feb.

HARLEQUIN DUCK (R5): ad. f Lake Delta

23 Feb thru (JL!, JaL, mob, ph).

Surf Scoter: singles Brewerton 18 – 28 Jan, 7 Feb; only reports.

White-winged Scoter: max 7 OnonL 20 Dec; 2 OtisL 20 Dec; 3 SSSP 27 Dec; 6 OswH 4 Feb; low numbers & relatively few reports.

Long-tailed Duck: 6 OnonL 20 Dec; max 150 OswH 8 Jan; 30 FH 18 Jan.

Bufflehead: 40 FH 1 Dec; max 50 Tuscarora Lake 3 Dec; 39 Skan 18 Jan.

Com. Goldeneye: max 220 OtisL 20 Dec; 439 Syr CBC 20 Dec; 180 Phoenix 26 Feb; 200 Oswego 27 Feb.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE (R5): f Phoenix 23 Jan thru (GD!, mob, ph); max 2 f Phoenix 31 Jan thru (DW, mob), same loc.

Hooded Merganser: 114 FH 16 Dec; max 131 OtisL 20 Dec; 69 Syr 20 Dec; 65 Bville 22 Feb.

Com. Merganser: 475 OLC 18 Jan; 330 Skan 18 Jan; max 500 Bville 22 Feb.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 200 FH 1 Dec; 90 DH 3 Jan; 111 OswH 18 Jan; 120 Bville 22 Feb.

Ruddy Duck: OnonL 1 Dec; Skan 2 Dec; OtisL 3 Dec; Little Falls 1 Jan; OLC 14 Jan; only reports.

Ring-necked Pheasant: 3 Oswego-Fulton CBC 15 Dec; 2 DB 23 Jan, 2 Phoenix 25 Jan; singles at 3 other locs.

Ruffed Grouse: max 5 Kirkland 21 Dec, 5 Sauquoit 21 Dec; 2 Bville 1 Jan; max 4 Boonville 2 Feb; singles at 14 other locs.

Wild Turkey: max 73 Fairfield 20 Dec; 65 Verona 25 Jan; 70 Hamilton 7 Feb; declines noted in some areas.

Red-throated Loon: FH 1 Dec; max 4 OswH 3 Dec; OnonL 20 Dec; DH 27 Dec.

Com. Loon: 3 Caz 3 Dec; 4 OswH 9 Dec; max 6 OnonL 29 Dec; last OswH 4 Feb.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 6 Caz 5 Dec; 2 Fulton 18 – 24 Jan; singles Tuscarora Lake, OnonL, Volney & Trenton; none after 24 Jan.

Horned Grebe: 2 DeRuyter Reservoir 3 Dec; 3 OswH 3 Dec; 4 Oswego 14 Dec; max 6 OnonL 15 Dec; 2 DH 27 Dec; 2 Skan 18 Jan.

Red-necked Grebe: max 8 OnonL 14 Dec; 2 WP 29 Dec; singles at 5 other locs.

Double-crested Cormorant: max 30 Syr 20 Dec; mostly small numbers reported.

Great Blue Heron: 4 SSSP 26 Dec; 3 DB 1 Jan; 3 Skan 4 Jan; max 6 OLC 18 Jan; relatively few overwinter.

HAWKS - LARIDS

Turkey Vulture: max 8 Fayetteville 20 Dec; 12 Syr CBC 20 Dec; 2 SH 30 Dec; 4 Van Buren

11 Jan; Verona 7 Jan (MV); Poland 26 Feb, early migrant?; as usual most reports clustered around Syr area.

Golden Eagle: New Woodstock 3 Dec; Tuscarora Lake 4 Dec; ad. Caz 8 Dec; Fairfield 5 Feb; Waterville 12 Feb; only sightings.

Bald Eagle: 12 Port Ontario 15 Dec; 10 Lake Delta 15 Jan; Pair Oriskany 18 Jan, rebuilding Red-tailed Hawk nest; 9 Minetto 18 Jan; 19 Oswego River (between Phoenix & Oswego) 18 Jan (BP); 7 Trenton 27 Jan, on deer carcass; 9 Bville 10 Feb; max 15 OLC 17 Feb.

N. Harrier: max 2 Little Falls 2 Jan, 2 DB 10 Jan; singles at about a dozen other locs.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: max 2 SFNS 22 Jan; around 50 reports of singles.

Cooper's Hawk: max 2, Williamstown 8 Dec, 2 Syr 20 Dec; widespread reports of singles.

N. Goshawk: SSSP 25 Dec (WF); SH 26 Dec thru (DW, LSr, CS); 2 SH 1 Feb (LSr), presumed pair.

Red-shouldered Hawk: singles reported from Verona, Syr, Chittenango, Kirkland, Bville, Const, Fayetteville, and Hast.

Red-tailed Hawk: 91 Syr CBC 20 Dec; 6 DB 24 Dec; max 19 Canas 1 Jan; 5 GLSP 18 Jan.

Rough-legged Hawk: 4 Clay 10 Jan; 4 Erieview 11 Jan; max 5 DB 10 Feb.

Am. Coot: 21 FH 1 Dec; max 55 Skan 2 Dec; 20 WP 2 Dec.

Wilson's Snipe: Elbridge 22 Feb (KB), unusual in winter.

Bonaparte's Gull: 17 FH 1 Dec; 28 Phillips Pt. 8 Dec; max 50 OneiL 15 Dec; none after 4 Jan.

THAYER'S GULL: Bville 18 Feb (DW!, mob, NYSARC); only report, *intro*.

Iceland Gull: 6 OneiL 15 Dec (DW, JT); 7 MCL 21 Jan (MV, BB); max 9 Bville 14 Feb (DW).

Ring-billed Gull: 570 OnonL 20 Dec; 450 OswH 26 Dec; 604 Canas 1 Jan; max 1400 Bville 11 Jan.

Herring Gull: 500 OneiL 15 Dec; 500 MCL 22 Jan; max 600 Bville 14 Feb.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 3 OneiL 15 Dec (DW); singles MCL, DB, FH, and Bville; Bville 28 Feb.

Glaucous Gull: max 3 OneiL 14 Dec, 3 OnonL 1 Feb, 3 Bville 14 Feb; last Bville 22 Feb

Great Black-backed Gull: 150 MCL 22 Jan; max 210 OnonL 1 Feb; 150 Bville 10 Feb.

larus species: 800 OnonL 6 Jan.

PIGEONS - PARROTS

Rock Pigeon: 350 Skan 15 Dec; max 516 Syr 20 Dec; 293 Little Falls 18 Jan.

Mourning Dove: 51 Dolgeville 9 Dec; max 67 CM 20 Dec; 57 Const 28 Jan;

E. Screech-Owl: 2 Syr 20 Dec; 2 Canas 1 Jan; 2 New Haven 11 Jan; 8 other locs.

Great Horned Owl: 2 Oswego 14 Dec; max 3 TR 21 Dec; 2 Manlius 21 Dec, 6 Feb; 2 Mexico 11 Jan; 2 SH 17 Jan – 21 Feb; 2 GLSP 18 Jan.

Snowy Owl: max 3 Hancock Airport 1 Jan (DWe), 3 OswH 4 Jan; 2 Caz 4 Jan; 2 Syr 1 Jan; 2 SH 13 Jan; widespread reports of singles.

Barred Owl: 9 brought to Kindred Kingdoms Wildlife Center thru; widespread reports of singles, but most from HERK.

Long-eared Owl: BLNC 21 Dec (JB, mob); OLC 10 Feb (SUNY-ESF Ornithology class, mob); only reports.

Short-eared Owl: max 9 Dvl 19 Dec (BB), excellent number; 7 Fort Plain 2 Jan (BLH, MB, EF); SH 12 Jan; 2 HA 18 Feb.

N. Saw-whet Owl: BLNS 4 Dec - 1 Jan; Syr 5 Feb (RW); ad. m Clay 17 Feb (JS), hit by vehicle; Waterville 25 Feb (RW), captured by Cooper's Hawk; only reports.

Belted Kingfisher: 2 Marcellus 17 Jan; just 2 persist into Feb.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: max 11 Bville 11 Feb; 6 GLSP 1 Feb.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Whitesboro 20 Dec; Oswego 2 Jan; Skan 4 Jan; f Otisco Lake 2 – 21 Feb, visits suet feeder; Syr 31 Jan; only reports.

Downy Woodpecker: 9 Mexico 16 Dec; 10 OnonL 20 Dec; max 13 Canas 1 Jan.

Hairy Woodpecker: 4 SH 3 Dec, 3 Jan; 4 Dolgeville 10 – 21 Dec; max 6 CM 20 Dec.

Black-backed Woodpecker: OF 15 Dec (GL), only report.

N. Flicker: 30 Oswego-Fulton CBC 15 Dec; 4 Hannibal 14 Dec; 4 HI 15 Dec; relatively few reports in Feb.

Pileated Woodpecker: 3 HI 15 Dec; 3 GLSP 23 Jan; max 4 Camden 14 Dec.

Am. Kestrel: About 16 reports of singles, only 3 in Feb.

Merlin: max 2 Syr 20 Dec; 15 other reports of singles.

Peregrine Falcon: pairs hold territory Syr & Utica thru; juv. *tundrius* Clinton 20 Dec- 9 Jan, unusual loc; ad. *phoenix* 25 Jan; Bville 17 – 18 Feb; Dolgeville 19 Jan.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: about 23 reports of singles 16 locs; only 4 reports in Feb

Blue Jay: 21 Dolgeville 11 Feb; 40 Williamstown 19, 28 Feb.

Ani. Crow: max 4000 Utica 20 Jan, flying in to roost; 1500 Little Falls 8 Feb.

Fish Crow: max 2 OnonL 20 Dec, 1 Jan, 18 Feb; Little Falls 21 Jan (BLH, EF).

Com. Raven: max 5 Cold Brook 21 Dec; 5 Erieville 7 Jan; 4 Central Square 13 Feb.

Horned Lark: 115 New Woodstock 10 Jan; 120 OtisL 11 Jan; max 250 Cassville 22 Feb.

Black-capped Chickadee: 30 Erieville 7 Dec; 34 HI 15 Dec; max 60 SFNS 20 Dec; 51 Canas 1 Jan; 30 Manlius 7 Feb.

Tufted Titmouse: 9 HI 15 Dec; 10 SFNS 20 Dec; 7 Lake Neatahwanta 28 Dec; max 11 Canastota 1 Jan.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 5 SSSP 26 Dec; 5 Fabius 14 Feb.

White-breasted Nuthatch: 7 Hannibal 14 Dec; max 15 HI 15 Dec; 10 SFNS 20 Dec; 7 Camden 26 Feb.

Brown Creeper: max 5 New Hartford 20 Dec; 4 Camden 1 Jan.

Winter Wren: 4 Syr CBC 20 Dec; max 3 CM 28 Dec; 2 Skan 4 Jan; singles at 8 other locs; last Fabius 14 Feb.

Marsh Wren: CM 20 Dec (DN), unusual in winter.

Carolina Wren: max 5 Syr 20 Dec; 2 Lake Neatahwanta 28 Dec; 2 Clinton 3 Jan; 2 Westmoreland 11 Feb.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: 7 HI 15 Dec; max 8 SSSP 27 Dec; 5 GB 27 Dec; 5 Mexico 29 Jan.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Elbridge 9 Dec – 19 Jan (KRB, mob), only report.

E. Bluebird: 8 GLSP 7 Dec; 8 Bville 13 Dec; 13 TR 23 Jan; 8 Elbridge 31 Jan; 8 SFNS 1, 15 Feb.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE: Erieville 1 – 7 Dec (BW!, mob, ph, NYSARC, 1st Reg winter record), continuing.

Hermit Thrush: Syr 10 Dec; max 2 Rice Creek Field Station 28 Dec; Elbridge 2 Jan thru; Bville 6 Feb; only reports.

Am. Robin: 22 Kirkville 21 Dec; 26 CM 27 Dec; 21 Oswego 11 Jan; max 45 SFNS 10 Feb; generally low numbers overwinter.

Gray Catbird: Liverpool 20 Dec; Dewitt 20 Dec – 29 Jan; only reports.

N. Mockingbird: 3 GLSP 7 Dec, 3 Jan; max 4 Syr 15 Jan; no reports east of greater Syr area.

Brown Thrasher: no reports

European Starling: 2000 Skan 8 Dec; 1300 OnonL 20 Dec; max 1075 Canas 1 Jan; 500 DB 23 Jan.

Cedar Waxwing: 16 SH 8 Dec; 15 Minetto 31 Dec; 38 TR 7 Feb; 27 Rice Creek Field Station 18 Feb; low numbers overwinter.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: 2 Pulaski 13 Dec (BP); max 5 SH 30 Dec (BC, MY); most reports from SH.

Snow Bunting: 178 Pulaski 26 Dec; max 200 Caz 29 Jan, 200 Cassville 22 Feb.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 4 HI 15 Dec (BG); max 13 Rice Creek Field Station 28 Dec (WF); only 4 reports and none after 1 Jan.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: CM 20 Dec; f New Haven 31 Dec – 14 Feb; only reports.

Am. Tree Sparrow: 40 Hannibal 14 Dec; max 80 OnonL 20 Dec; 56 Dolgeville 10 Feb.

Chipping Sparrow: Const 8 Dec – 12 Jan (MS); Clinton 20 Dec (MP); Skan 29 Dec thru (KB); SH thru 23 Feb (LS); only reports.

Fox Sparrow: Williamstown 1 Dec (FB); Waterville 15 Dec (RW); SH thru (LS); max 2 SH 1 – 23 Feb (LS); only reports.

Song Sparrow: max 5 HI 15 Dec; 3 Mexico 13 Jan; 4 TR 15 Jan.

Swamp Sparrow: Syr 20 Dec; Skan 4 Jan; Little Falls 22 Jan; Waterville 26, 29 Jan; only reports.

White-throated Sparrow: max 27 SFNS 20 Dec; 10 Syr 20 Dec; 15 CM 27 Dec; 9 Const 2 Jan.

White-crowned Sparrow: max 3 Bville 1 Jan (JB); 2 DB 23, 24 Jan (JC); 3 other singles; last DB 25 Jan (JC).

Dark-eyed Junco: 44 HI 15 Dec; 28 Syr 20 Dec; 26 Pulaski 3 Jan.

N. Cardinal: max 25 OnonL 20 Dec; 23 Elbridge 2 Jan.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK/BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK: Syr Dec thru 11 Jan (JMw), visits bird feeder sporadically, *intro*.

Red-winged Blackbird: 2 Williamstown 4 Dec; max 10 Tully 8 Dec; 5 Minoa 20 Dec; 3 Elbridge 4 Jan; 6 Trenton 6 Jan; 3 more reports of singles; no reports after 6 Jan.

Com. Grackle: max 3 Bville 27 Dec; 2 Williamstown 30, 31 Dec; 2 more reports; none after 12 Jan.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 26 Clay 20 Dec; 15 Westmoreland 13 Jan; 7 Dolgeville 20 Jan; 21 Central Square 16 Feb; only 2 reports in Feb.

Pine Grosbeak: 3 Marcy 20 Dec (SH), only report.

Purple Finch: 6 Whitestown 5 Dec; 6 Dolgeville 6 Jan; max 7 Oswego 14 Feb; low numbers.

House Finch: 17 Waterville 15 Dec; 20 Hamilton 26 Dec, 24 Jan; max 25 Skan 4 Jan.
Com. Redpoll: arr BLNC 26 Dec; 65 Central Square 29 Jan; max 75 Hast 20 Feb; 66 Dolgeville 21 Feb; 70 Cleveland 28 Feb.
Pine Siskin: 19 Const 1 Dec; 16 Dolgeville 28 Jan; max 20 Verona 14, 15 Feb.
Am. Goldfinch: 35 Erieville 3 Dec; 35 Syr 16 Dec; 50 Williamstown 12 Dec; 27 Fayetteville

20 Dec; 26 OnonL 20 Dec; 40 BLNC 10 Feb; max 120 Dolgeville 15 Jan.
Evening Grosbeak: 20 SH 9 Dec, numbers varied at this loc thru; 8 Newport 24 Jan; 9 Boonville 13 Feb; max 17 Camden 15 Feb; only locs.
House Sparrow: max 155 Columbus Circle 20 Dec; 90 e. Syr 25 Dec.

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

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The winter started out relatively mild, but temperatures dropped through the season and by the time it was over nearly all North Country residents agreed it was among the most brutal winters in recent memory. December's mean temperature in Watertown was 33° F, which is about 7° above normal, and relatively warm temperatures occurred on many days throughout the month, including a seasonal high of 60° on Christmas Day. January's mean temperature was 15°, or 4° below normal, and included four nights during the first half of the month with overnight temperatures dropping to at least -20°, resulting in extensive ice formation on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. January ended with seven consecutive sub-zero nights, and the cold intensified the following month, resulting in the coldest February on record. February's mean temperature was just 6°, an amazing 15° below normal, and the temperature dropped below zero on 20 nights during the month. It was also a very dry winter, with below average precipitation all three months.

Waterfowl diversity was fairly high in December, but duck numbers were generally low, and became very low as most lakes and rivers iced up in January. The first large southbound movement of Snow Geese noted all year came on 2 December, continuing the recent trend for progressively later fall goose migration. Seen at Montario Point on that date was a group of four Cackling Geese on Lake Ontario and single Greater White-fronted and Ross's Geese among the numerous flocks of Snow and Canada Geese passing overhead. Notable ducks included two Harlequin Ducks found by Mike Jeziorski at Montario Point on 1 December, and another Harlequin Duck Nick Leone found on the St. Lawrence River on 18 January. Only two Barrow's Goldeneye were found, both females on the St. Lawrence River, for a similar tally to the previous winter but fewer than most recent years.

Notable waterbirds included good numbers of lingering loons and grebes in December and early January. Red-throated Loons are seen infrequently during

winter, and the five off Sackett's Harbor on 16 December was exceptional. The year's last Red-necked Grebe was also seen in the same location that day. Several Great Blue Herons attempted to overwinter, including one that did so successfully by apparently spending nearly all of February inside the culvert at the Lower Lake outlet in Canton.

For the second consecutive winter, Snowy Owls were present in very high numbers, although seemingly not quite as abundant as the previous winter, and exhibited a slightly different Regional distribution. The largest concentration noted was on Point Peninsula and adjacent areas of northwestern Jefferson County, where many observers saw up to 15 individuals per day. This area is historically among the best places for Snowy Owls in the region, but oddly had relatively low numbers during the otherwise exceptional invasion of 2013-14. Large numbers of Snowy Owls were also reported this winter in the Black River Valley around Lowville, and in a broad swath from Fort Drum northward to the St. Lawrence River near Alexandria.

Most notable among several interesting woodpecker reports was a Northern Flicker with a red malar stripe Nick Leone saw in Orleans on 20 February. Unfortunately, the flicker flew off before Nick could see enough details to determine whether this was a Red-shafted Flicker or an intergrade. For the third consecutive winter Red-headed Woodpeckers overwintered on Fort Drum, this time one adult and two juveniles on the same territory that has been continuously occupied since May of 2012. Several consecutive large acorn crops appear to have allowed at least one Red-headed Woodpecker to make it through two very hard winters. Lee Ellsworth saw the only Yellow-bellied Sapsucker of the season at his feeders on 18 January.

A relatively long list of half-hardies was seen this winter, but numbers of individuals were low for nearly all species. Most notable among the seasonal rarities was an Orange-crowned Warbler at Southwick Beach State Park and a Winter Wren at Westcott Beach State Park, both on 26 December; a Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Anne Moomey's feeder in Stockholm for much of the winter, and an Eastern Towhee at Nancy Weal's feeder for more than a month mid-winter. Virtually every species of half-hardy that regularly winters in the Region was present in very low numbers, and some species, such as Song Sparrow, was virtually absent after December, with the only late season reports coming from feeders during the Great Backyard Bird Count. White-throated Sparrows were a little more common, with good counts at a few feeders, but by January were virtually impossible to find away from feeders. Northern Flicker, Eastern Bluebird, and American Robin were among other half-hardies that were unusually scarce.

Although several species of irruptives came south this winter, none were present in particularly high numbers. Redpolls were widespread in modest numbers, and mostly seemed to feed on natural seed sources until late January and February, when feeder-watchers started reporting them regularly. Five reports of six individual Hoary Redpolls included good details, all seen in

February. Pine Siskins were also present in modest numbers throughout. Other finch reports included two Red Crossbills over Taylor Creek State Forest on 24 January, and two reports of Evening Grosbeaks at feeders in lowland areas in January, both of which were seen on one day only. Bohemian Waxwings were unreported until late January, when small groups were seen in both the St. Lawrence Valley and the Black River Valley, but were not reported again until several flocks appeared in late February.

For the season I received reports of 114 species, about average for recent years. The season's highlight once again was Snowy Owl, with many observers seeing even more this winter than last. The very cold temperatures during the latter half of the season was clearly the "lowlight", as it not only resulted in poor birding but discouraged most birders from venturing into the field at all.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BPWMA – Black Pd WMA; BRB – Black River Bay; BRV – Black River Valley; CV – T Cape Vincent; FD – Fort Drum Military Reservation; FL – Fisher's Landing, T Alexandria; GPSP – Grass Point SP; HH – Henderson Harbor; HP – Hawkins Pt, T Massena; JCSP – Jacques Cartier SP; KC – Kelsey Creek, T Watertown; MP – Montario Pt, T Ellisburg; PilPt – Pillar Pt; PtPen – Point Peninsula; PtS – Point Salubrious; PRGC – Partridge Run Golf Course, T Canton; SBSPvSouthwick Beach SP; SH – Sackett's Harbor; SLR – St. Lawrence River; StPt – Stony Pt, T Henderson; TIB – Thousand Islands Bridge; TP – Tibbitt's Pt, T Cape Vincent; ULLWMA – Upper & Lower Lakes WMA; WBSP – Westcott Beach SP; WI – Wellesley Island; WISP – Wellesley Island SP; WHWMA – Wilson Hill WMA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS—VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: with large flock Snow and Canada Geese over MP 2 Dec (JB).

Snow Goose: first widespread southbound passage of "fall" 2 Dec; many moving thru 19 Dec.

Ross's Goose: MP 2 Dec (JB); SLR T Waddington 7 Dec (JB).

Cackling Goose: 4 MP 2 Dec (JB).

Mute Swan: max 29 FL 23 Jan.

Tundra Swan: max 157 Eel Bay 27 Dec.

Gadwall: max 237 TP 20 Dec.

Am. Wigeon: PtPen 30 Dec, only report.

Am. Black Duck: max 63 BPWMA 2 Dec.
N. Pintail: max 3 BRB 14 Dec; PtPen 31 Dec; f FD 4 Feb thru.
Green-winged Teal: pair FD 23 Jan thru.
Redhead: max 170 StPt 21 Dec; last WI 26 Jan.
Ring-necked Duck: 2 T Lowville 1 Dec; PtPen 4 Dec; 2 BRB 14 Dec; only reports.
Greater Scaup: max 500 StPt 21 Dec; no double-digit counts after Dec.
Lesser Scaup: 2 HH 1 Dec; 4 CV 2 Jan; only reports.
Harlequin Duck: 2 MP 1 Dec (MJ, NL); SLR between GPSP & TIB 18-23 Jan (NL, JB).
Surf Scoter: PilPt 29 Dec.
White-winged Scoter: max 15 BPWMA 2 Dec.
Black Scoter: 2 WBSP 2 Dec, only report (JB).
Long-tailed Duck: max 890 MP 2 Dec.
Bufflehead: max 51 SLR T Massena 27 Dec.
Com. Goldeneye: max 816 SLR between FL & TIB 18 Jan.
Barrow's Goldeneye: f TP 23 Dec (NL); f SLR T Massena 11 Jan (JB).
Hooded Merganser: max 40 SLR T Massena 27 Dec (JB).
Com. Merganser: 2000 Pt. Salubrious 20 Dec (NL); max 4000 Eel Bay 27 Dec (NL).
Red-breasted Merganser: max 366 SLR between FL & TIB 18 Jan.
Red-throated Loon: MP 2 Dec; 2 SH 14 Dec; max 5 SH 16 Dec (JB).
Com. Loon: last 3 JCSP 28 Dec.
Horned Grebe: last SLR off WHWMA 11 Jan.
Red-necked Grebe: PtPen 4 Dec (ET); SH 16 Dec (JB); only reports.
Double-crested Cormorant: last HH 26 Dec.
Great Blue Heron: ULLWMA thru; 4 other Jan reports more than usual.

HAWKS—ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: unprecedented numbers throughout inland areas Jan & Feb; max up to 28/day T Champion Feb.
N. Harrier: PtPen 15 Dec & 15 Feb only reports.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 9 reports but several suspected to be misidentified Cooper's Hawks.
Cooper's Hawk: many reports; estimated to outnumber Sharp-shinned Hawks 10-1.
N. Goshawk: immi ULLWMA 12 Dec; ad FD 17 Dec; only reports.
Red-tailed Hawk: 5-12/day typical most areas; modest winter numbers.
Rough-legged Hawk: max 12 PtPen 7 Dec; few counts of more than 4-6/day.

Golden Eagle: T Copenhagen 24 Feb (TF).
Am. Coot: FD 23 Jan thru, only report.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 2 MP 2 Dec; last PtPen 4 Dec.
Little Gull: 2 MP 1 Dec (NL).
Ring-billed Gull: max 21 WISP 3 Dec; virtually absent after Dec.
Herring Gull: max 350 WBSP 2 Dec.
Iceland Gull: max 7 HP 7 Jan where present to at least 6 Feb; T Ellisburg farm sewage lagoon 19 Jan only other report.
Glaucous Gull: max 5 HP 24 Jan where several other report Jan; BRB 14 Dec only other report.
Great Black-backed Gull: max 130 HP 7 Dec.

PIGEONS—FALCONS

E. Screech-Owl: T Stockholm 16 Feb only report.
Snowy Owl: up to 15/day PtPen thru; up to 9/day fields T Leray & Philadelphia including FD thru; up to 8/day BRV thru; smaller concentrations elsewhere in lowland areas; high.
Short-eared Owl: up to 9/day PtPen through; 1-4/day CV 15 Dec thru; PRWMA 15 Dec; flying over SLR T Waddington 11 Jan.
N. Saw-whet Owl: T Norwood 18 Feb, only report.
Belted Kingfisher: last CV 17 Dec.
Red-headed Woodpecker: 1 ad & 2 juv thru on FD territory that has been continuously occupied since May 2012.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: max 3 PtPen 19 Jan.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Watertown feeder 18 Jan, only report (LE).
Northern Flicker: male with red moustache T Orleans 20 Feb flew before could be determined whether Red-shafted or Intergrade (NL!); 8 reports of Yellow-shafted, scarce.
American Kestrel: 6 reports overwintering birds through 11 Feb; all presumed to have perished by Feb.
Merlin: T Watertown 28 Jan, only report.
Peregrine Falcon: resident pair BI only reports.

FLYCATCHERS—WAXWINGS

Northern Shrike: about half as many reports as usual.
Horned Lark: max 56 T Alexandria 5 Jan, low.
Carolina Wren: T Watertown 3-8 Dec; CV 18 Jan; T Canton 18-22 Feb only reports.
Winter Wren: WBSP 26 Dec (JB), rare in winter.
E. Bluebird: MP 2 Dec only report, low.

Am. Robin: max 8 PtPt 12 Dec; very low.
Bohemian Waxwing: 20 T Lisbon (EW) and 2 T Lowville 24 Jan (AK) only reports until 20 Feb when several flocks arr; max 120 FD 25 Feb.
Cedar Waxwing: max 22 T Massena 27 Dec; scarce.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: 1-5/day NW JEFF; unreported elsewhere.
Snow Bunting: max 785 CV 14 Jan; generally low numbers.
Orange-crowned Warbler: SBSP 26 Dec (JB); rare in winter.
Yellow-rumped Warbler: PtPen 15 Dec, only report (NL).

TANAGERS—WEAVERS

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: at T Stockholm feeder 21 Dec to 2 Feb (AM, photos!), rare in winter.
E. Towhee: T Adams feeder early Dec to 9 Feb (NW!), rare in winter.
Am. Tree Sparrow: max 78 PS 2 Jan.
Field Sparrow: T Canton 21 Dec (TL!), rare in winter.

Song Sparrow: 3 reports on Great Backyard Bird Count 12-15 Feb; only one other report after 8 Dec.

White-throated Sparrow: generally scarce but good numbers at scattered feeders including max up to 15/day KC thru.

Red-winged Blackbird: 5 reports.

E. Meadowlark: last 2 PtPen 15 Dec.

Rusty Blackbird: SH 14 Dec, only report (JB, CC, LC).

Common Grackle: T Watertown 13 Feb only report.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 8 T Massena 14 Feb.

Purple Finch: 6 reports, scarce.

Red Crossbill: 2 Taylor Creek SF 24 Jan (JB), only report.

Common Redpoll: max 120 FD 9 Dec & PRGC 21 Feb; most reports of fewer than 30; modest flight year.

Hoary Redpoll: FD 11 Feb (JB!); 2 T Canton 13 Feb (RR!); T Potsdam 19 Feb (JN!); PRGC 21 Feb (JB!); T Canton 27 Feb (TW photos!).

Pine Siskin: max 27 T Lowville 10 Jan; small flocks throughout.

Evening Grosbeak: 3 T Orleans 3 Jan; T Stockholm 29 Jan only reports.

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REGION 7—ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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The winter of 2014 began with warmer than normal temperatures. In December, temperatures for the Region averaged 1-4° F above normal. The warmest temperature in the Region was 53.5°, recorded in Ellenburg Depot. The Region was also wetter than normal in December. Precipitation ranged from 90% of normal in the Northern Plateau to 150% of normal in northern Champlain Valley. January ushered in colder than normal temperatures throughout the Region. Temperatures ranged from 1-2° colder than normal for the Champlain Valley to 4-6(8)° colder than normal in the Northern Plateau. Precipitation ranged from near average to a low of 50% of normal in portions of the Northern Plateau. February was an extraordinarily cold month, with many areas experiencing the coldest February ever recorded. Temperatures for the Region averaged 12-16° below normal. Precipitation ranged from 70% to 90% of

normal throughout the Region.

This winter was marked by numerous migrant species reported well beyond their usual departure dates, especially throughout the Champlain Valley. A Wood Duck was reported from Essex County as late as 14 February. As a reference, the record sighting for Wood Ducks in Clinton County is 4 February. Additional lingering species included a Red-shouldered Hawk reported from Port Henry on 10 January, a Hermit Thrush reported from Westport on 12 December, a Northern Flicker reported from Ticonderoga on 24 February, a Winter Wren reported from Haystack Mountain on 11 January, an E. Meadowlark reported from Essex on 16 December thru 4 January, and Song, Savannah, and White-throated Sparrows reported several times each throughout the Champlain Valley

Waterfowl highlights included 3000 Snow Geese reported from Chazy on 12 December, a N. Shoveler and a Red-breasted Merganser that were each reported once from Lake Champlain, a **Barrow's Goldeneye** reported from Cumberland Head on 9 and 11 December and from Bulwagga Bay on 28 December, and a **Red-necked Grebe** reported from Ticonderoga on 26 February.

Abundance and diversity of irruptive boreal species were modest this winter. Red Crossbills were reported several times from the High Peaks region, with a high count of 52 on 3 January from Lake Placid. The only report of White-winged Crossbills was from Saranac Lake on 26 January. The high count of Common Redpolls was 250, reported from Intervale Lowlands on 2 February. There were several reports of Pine Siskins throughout the Region, with the high count of 50 reported from Maple Meadows on 26 February. Only a single Evening Grosbeak was reported from the Region this season. Interestingly, there were no reports of Snowy Owls, which is a stark contrast to the many reports from the previous winter.

On the other hand, abundance and diversity of overwintering boreal stalwarts were at or near expectations. Snow Buntings were reported from several locations throughout the Region, with the high count of 155 reported from Westport on 13 December. Horned Larks were also reported from several locations throughout the Region. Bohemian Waxwings were first reported in early February from the Saranac Lake area. The high count of 74 Bohemian Waxwings was reported from Bloomingdale on 14 February. Individual N. Shrikes were widely reported from the Region from early December through mid-February.

Other notable sightings included a **Short-eared Owl** reported from Westport on 5 and 8 December, a **Iceland Gull** and three **Glaucous Gulls** reported on 14 December from Plattsburgh and Chazy respectively, a **Red-bellied Woodpecker** reported several times from 14 December thru 19 January, and a **Lapland Longspur** reported from Westport on 16 December and Chazy Riverlands on 15 January.

A total of 97 species was reported this winter, 12 shy of the current winter

season record of 109 species.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AP – Ausable Pt; BK – Beekmantown; BD – Bloomingdale; BBg – Bloomingdale Bog; BBay – Bulwagga Bay; CP – Crown Pt; CH – Chazy; CR – Chazy Riverlands; ES – Essex; HayStMtn – Haystack Mountain; IndLk – Indian L; IL – Intervale Lowlands; KN – Keene; LkAl – Lake Alice WMA; LC – La Chute; LkCham – Lake Champlain; LP – Lake Placid; MM – Maple Meadows; NP – Noblewood Pk; OseeLk – Oseetah L; PU – Peru; PB – Plattsburgh; PS – Paul Smiths; PtAuR – Point Au Roche; PH – Port Henry; PK – Port Kent; RPt – Rouses Pt; SabtsBg – Sabattis Bog; SB – Sandy Beach; SL – Saranac L; TI – Ticonderoga; VV – Vermontville; WebSw – Webb Royce Swamp, WP – Westport; WB – Whallons Bay Rd; WL – Willsboro.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 3000 CH 12 Dec (BK); 2500 WL 14 Dec (GCh).

Wood Duck: 2 TI 17 Jan G&MC; MM 14 Feb (SR).

Am. Black Duck: max 25 MM 12 Feb (SR).

N. Shoveler: CP 11 Dec (SR), only report.

Redhead: 3 WP 25 Jan (GCh), only report.

Ring-necked Duck: max 7 WP 25 Jan (GCh).

Lesser Scaup: AP 14 Dec (SR); max 4 ES 25 Jan (GCh).

Long-tailed Duck: PB 9 Dec (BK), only report.

Bufflehead: max 47 WP 2 Jan (GCh).

Com. Goldeneye: max 850 SB 13 Dec (SR); PB 1 Jan (NO).

Barrow's Goldeneye: CumHd 9 & 11 Dec (BK); BBay 28 Dec (ED & MMc).

Hooded Merganser: max 14 AP 1 Jan (JO).

Com. Merganser: max 750 RPt 26 Dec (DR).

Red-breasted Merganser: PH 4 Jan. (GCh), only report.

Com. Loon: max 3 NP 26 Jan (AB), multiple reports on LkCham.

Red-necked Grebe: TI 26 Feb (G&MC).

Double-crested Cormorant: max 4 SB 13 Dec (SR).

HAWKS - LARIDS

Bald Eagle: max 6 ES 22 Jan (ZT); 2 SL 15 Feb (M&TF); multiple reports along LkCham.

N. Harrier: max 2 WB 4 Dec (SR).

Red-shouldered Hawk: PH 10 Jan (SR), only report.

Rough-legged Hawk: max 4 WP 16 Dec (GCh); 2 WebSw 2 Jan (AC)

Am. Coot: max 5 PH 14 Dec (GCh).

Iceland Gull: PB 14 Dec (BM, BK).

Glaucous Gull: max 3 CH 14 Dec (BK); CH 21 Feb (AB).

Great Black-backed Gull: max 60 CH 14 Dec (BK).

PIGEONS - PARROTS

E. Screech-Owl: WS 20 Dec (GCh); NP 26 Jan (AB).

Great Horned Owl: TI 14 Dec (GCh); IndLk 15 Feb (MMo).

Barred Owl: WS 4 Dec (SR); TI 21 Dec (SR); KN 15 Jan (J&PT).

Short-eared Owl: 2 WB 5 Dec (AB); WP 8 Dec (J&PT).

N. Saw-whet Owl: KN 19 Dec (J&PT), only report.

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER (R7): WP 14 Dec (GCh); TI 3 Jan (SR); NP 19 Jan (GCh).

Black-backed Woodpecker: max 4 VV 23 Jan (ES).

N. Flicker: CH 1 Jan (JO); WP 31 Jan (BM); TI 24 Feb (GCh).

Merlin: NP 21 Feb (AB), only report.

Peregrine: TI 21 Dec (SR); CP 2 Jan (GCh).

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: PtAuR 14 Dec (TM); WP 14 Dec (GCh); IndLk 18 Jan (MMo).

Gray Jay: max 9 BBg 14 Dec (D&AB); multiple reports from BBg, LkClr, and SabtsBg.

Horned Lark: max 50 CP 4 Jan (SR); 14 CR 25 Jan (BK), multiple reports from WP.

Boreal Chickadee: 2 BBg 10 Jan (B&RB); **Tufted Titmouse:** BK 1 Dec thru 6 Feb (MB); max 5 TI 1 Jan (GC).

Winter Wren: HayStMtn 11 Jan (GD).

Carolina Wren: PK 9 Dec (DB); WP 14 Dec (GCh); PH 16 Dec (GC); SL 21 Dec (RB).

E. Bluebird: 4 WB 4 Dec (SR); max 8 LkAl 1 Jan (JO); 3 2 Feb (SR).

Hermit Thrush: WP 12 Dec (SR), only report.

N. Mockingbird: PB 26 Dec (DR); TI 4 Jan (GCh); only reports.

Bohemian Waxwings: max 74 BD 14 Feb (A&DB); 55 WP 23 Feb (SR).

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: WP 16 Dec (SR); CR 15 Jan (BK).

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: 5 CH 12 Dec (BK); 15 PH 16 Dec (GCh); max 22 SL 9 Jan (GD);

Savannah Sparrow: TI 16 Dec (GCh); WP 21 Dec (SR).

Song Sparrow: CH 12 Dec (BK); ES 14 Dec (GCh); max 5 PH 16 Dec (GCh).

White-throated Sparrow: TI 4 Feb (GC); max 3 SL 11 Feb (RB).

Snow Bunting: max 155 WP 13 Dec (SR); 60 WP 15 Jan (SR); 50 CR 25 Jan (BK).

Red-winged Blackbird: CH 12 Dec (BK), only report.

E. Meadowlark: ES 16 Dec thru 4 Jan (GCh).

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 5 SL 21 Dec (AB).

Purple Finch: 2 TI 30 Jan (M&GC), only report.

Red Crossbill: max 52 LP 3 Jan (LP); 15 PS 3 Jan (BM), thru 23 Feb.

White-winged Crossbill: 3 SL 26 Jan (AB), only report.

Com. Redpoll: max 250 IL 2 Feb (LM); multiple reports from SL.

Pine Siskin: 4 PU 13 Feb (BP); max 50 MM 26 Feb (SR).

Evening Grosbeak: OseeLk 13 Jan (GD), only report.

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REGION 8—HUDSON-MOHAWK

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Winter 2014-15 was among the coldest winters in the past century. December ended mild overall, 2° above average, and wet, 2.44" more than average. After New Year's Day, temperatures took a nosedive and stayed well below average until late March, as a stubborn and persistent high-pressure ridge over the West Coast funneled cold polar air from northern Canada into the Northeastern states. The pattern remained largely unchanged for months. January ended 3° below

average, but the real deep freeze occurred in February with a record 13.2° below average, tallying in as the second coldest February and fourth coldest month ever recorded at Albany. Only one day rose above freezing in February, and the season tallied 19 days with temperatures below zero. Ice-breaking boats worked round the clock to keep the Hudson River open for commercial traffic, and in some locations up to four feet of frost permeated the ground. Snow was also above average, with roughly 78" totaling at Albany for the season. Snow cover remained intact for the months of January and February and well into mid-March.

A Cackling Goose spotted in Delmar, Albany County, is the only waterfowl of note this season, and most other waterfowl observations came from December. After the deep freeze, ducks and other water birds moved out of the area by necessity, and those that might have lingered were not detected as apparently few birders had the energy to scan the margins of frozen water in sub-zero wind chills. In this context, the appearance of an Osprey in Whitehall, Washington County, rare during any winter month in Region 8—let alone a year with such extensive ice cover—is nothing short of miraculous.

After last winter's Snowy Owl irruption, this year produced only two individual sightings, one of which was found with a wing injury in Albany. Short-eared Owls were scarce. The second report of Boreal Owl in Saratoga County (the last one occurred there in the 1970s), and perhaps one of only a few in Region 8, occurred in February. The owl was photographed sitting on a backyard feeder in Gansevoort, Saratoga County.

Appearances of half-hardy species were respectable for the season, including a Wood Thrush that appeared near Five Rivers, Albany. Multiple observers gave convincing descriptions that rule out Hermit Thrush as the bird lingered briefly near the buildings before dashing into the woods. A Varied Thrush was discovered and photographed at a private feeder in Halfmoon, Saratoga County. Gray Catbird, Hermit Thrush, Eastern Towhee, and a Baltimore Oriole were found in the first half of winter, as well as seasonally temperamental sparrows such as Savannah, White-crowned, and Fox. Birders scanning exposed fields with large flock of Horned Lark and Snow Buntings successfully picked out several Lapland Longspurs.

With such cold, feeders were understandably important oases for birding—nearly all of this winter's interesting birds came from backyards and feeders. Finches were moderately common, with small but regular reports of Common Redpoll and Pine Siskin. There were no reports of crossbills. Saratoga County remains a yearly stronghold for feeder observations of Evening Grosbeak.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

CBC – Christmas Bird Count; COX – T Cocksackie, GREE; FtE – T Fort Edwards, WASH; TR – Tomhannock Res, RENS; VF – Vischer's Ferry, SARA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 1000 Saratoga L SARA 4 Dec.
Brant: 17 S RENS CBC 27 Dec.
CACKLING GOOSE (R8): Delmar 1 Dec.
Gadwall: Ghent 15 Jan.
N. Shoveler: Glens Falls WARR 14 Dec; Copake L COLU 21 Dec.
N. Pintail: max 3 Ft Miller WASH 13 Dec.
Canvasback: max 2 Saratoga L SARA 4 Dec.
Redhead: max 11 Saratoga L SARA 3 Dec.
Ring-necked Duck: Livingston COLU 11 Jan, unusual in Jan.
Lesser Scaup: max 100 Saratoga L SARA 4 Jan.
Greater Scaup: max 20 Saratoga L SARA 4 Jan.
Surf Scoter: Hudson Falls WASH 13 Dec.
White-winged Scoter: Cohoes ALBA 12 Jan; max 4 Stillwater SARA 22 Feb.
Com. Goldeneye: max 200 Stillwater SARA 5 Feb.
Barrow's Goldeneye: Cohoes ALBA 28 Feb-3 Mar.
Red-breasted Merganser: Schuylerville RENS 28 Feb; Green I SARA 28 Feb.
Ruddy Duck: last Copake L COLU 19 Dec.
Com. Loon: S Glens Falls WARR 14 Dec.
Red-necked Grebe: max 7 Saratoga L SARA 3 Dec.
Turkey Vulture: arr Germantown COLU 20 Feb.
Black Vulture: max 6 New Scotland ALBA 31 Jan.

HAWKS - LARIDS

OSPREY (R8): Whitehall WASH 14 Feb, unusual date.
Red-shouldered Hawk: Albany 10 Jan; Stuyvesant COLU 7 Feb; Athens GREE 17 Feb.
Rough-legged Hawk: max 4 FtE 22 Jan; Claverack COLU 16 Feb; 3 Kingsbury WASH 23 Feb.
Golden Eagle: L Taghkanic SP 23 Dec; Austerlitz COLU 5 Feb.
Am. Coot: last Copake L COLU 13 Dec.
Wilson's Snipe: 2 Ephratah FULT 13 Jan.
Iceland Gull: max 5 Cohoes ALBA 10 Jan.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: Cohoes ALBA 18 Jan; Crescent ALBA 13 Feb; Colonie landfill ALBA 19 Feb.
Glaucous Gull: 2 Cohoes ALBA 10 Jan; Crescent Power Plant ALBA 10-13 Jan.

PIGEONS - PARROTS

Snowy Owl: FtE Jan 7; Albany 4 Feb, injured.
Short-eared Owl: Ft. Plain SCHO 6 Jan.
BOREAL OWL: Gansevoort SARA 7 Feb.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: Ghent COLU 7 Jan; Schuylerville RENS 18 Feb.
Horned Lark: max 600 Schodack RENS 1 Feb.
Winter Wren: Troy CBC 3 Jan; last Cohoes ALBA 22 Jan.
Hermit Thrush: last Selkirk ALBA 23 Jan.
WOOD THRUSH (R8): Five Rivers ALBA 1 Jan.
VARIED THRUSH: Halfmoon SARA 14 Feb.
Gray Catbird: Kinderhook COLU 20 Dec; Troy CBC 3 Jan.

Am. Pipit: Saratoga Springs CBC 14 Dec;
Germantown COLU 18 Jan.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: 4 Ravena ALBA 14 Dec;
5 Stuyvesant COLU 2-14 Feb; FtE 5 Feb;
Charlton SARA 7 Feb

Snow Bunting: max 300 Northumberland
SARA 11 Feb.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: Athens GREE 13 Feb.

Chipping Sparrow: Albany 23 Feb,
overwintering?.

LARK SPARROW: FtE 14-25 Dec.

Savannah Sparrow: max 6 Schodack RENS
31 Jan.

Fox Sparrow: E Greenwich WASH 18 Jan.

White-crowned Sparrow: Chatham CBC 20
Dec; Troy CBC 3 Jan; 5 Delmar ALBA 11 Jan;
Ghent COLU 19 Jan.

Rusty Blackbird: Stuyvesant COLU 20 Dec.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE (R8): Athens GREE
11 Dec.

Purple Finch: Austerlitz 10 Dec.

Com. Redpoll: arr Ghent COLU 8 Dec; max
24 Burnt Hills ALBA 14 Feb, moderately
uncommon.

Pine Siskin: Providence SARA 12 Dec;
Queensbury WARR 12 Dec; numerous reports
of small numbers thru.

Evening Grosbeak: 5 Stoney Creek SARA 29
Jan.

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REGION 9—HUDSON-DELAWARE

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December was 4.6° F warmer than normal, giving plenty of open water for the Christmas Bird Counts. The period between the 24th and 28th saw highs in the fifties, with Poughkeepsie reaching 62° on Christmas Day. Precipitation for the month was normal. The very beginning of January also saw mild temperatures, with a high of 51° on 4 January. Then the overall weather pattern started to change, and the next seven weeks saw plenty of snow and well below normal temperatures. Many bodies of water froze just before the waterfowl count. Poughkeepsie saw lows in the single digits eight days out of the month, with the coldest on 29 January at -5°. The month's average temperature was 1.5° below normal. February was bitterly cold the entire month. Twenty-five days were below normal temperature, and there were 10 days with lows below zero. Poughkeepsie only broke 40° once. The month came in at 12.7° below normal!

The most unusual report of the season was of a **Crested Caracara** that was observed by David Baker, Edwin McGowan, and Gerhard Patsch at Doodletown, Bear Mountain State Park, Rockland County on 5 January. The bird was soaring overhead clearly showing field markings of a Crested Caracara. It had highly contrasting white ovals at the base of primaries on black wings, a long narrow body, overall buff tone on breast and neck, and a pale tail with dark terminal band. Wings had the appearance of being closer to mid-body than other raptors. Even the flattened crest was noted during its flight when the bird was in

profile. It is interesting to note that a caracara was photographed in Berks County, Pennsylvania a week earlier. This bird could be the same individual. If submitted and accepted by NYSARC, this will be New York State's first record. If not, we will have to wait till the spring report when a Crested Caracara is well documented in nearby Orange County.

Notable waterfowl included an immature Greater White-fronted Goose that traveled around the Harrison and Rye area in December and January. An adult made a brief appearance at Larchmont Reservoir. Brant again wintered all season along the Sound, and Cackling Goose sightings continue to increase. Rare in winter, two Blue-winged Teal were found in Round Pond, Amenia on 5 December. More remarkable was the male photographed by Adrienne Popko in Millerton 14-17 January. Other ducks included a Eurasian Wigeon wintering along the Sound, a smattering of Redhead and Northern Pintail, and all three scoter species.

Tait Johansson found a Spotted Sandpiper in Muscoot Reservoir, Somers on 25 January at Deans Bridge. It was relocated later on a rock in the middle of the reservoir where Route 116 crosses the reservoir. This remarkable winter record is the fourth for Westchester County.

The Black-headed Gull found in New Rochelle/Larchmont in November continued to 11 December, mainly in the Five Island Park vicinity. Frank Guida found what was probably the same bird at Five Island Park on 15 February. This bird only remained for the day.

A few Snowy Owls were reported, with one out of place on top of a house in a developed area of Harrison. Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge had a season high of twenty Short-eared Owls on 13 January.

Karen Maloy found and photographed a **Gyr Falcon** at Blue Chip Farm in Ulster County on 6 February, and it was seen well by many birders through many following days. It was last reported north of the location on 28 February.

Half-hardies included three Eastern Phoebe and five species of warbler, most seen on Christmas Bird Counts mentioned below. An Indigo Bunting was in Marshlands Conservancy during December and made it into the first few days on the new year.

Christmas Counts had a mix of weather, but each had its highlights. Most reported good numbers of Red-shouldered Hawks.

The Rockland Christmas Bird Count [NYRC] tallied 88 species on 14 December. Highlights included two Red-necked Grebes, a new species to the count. Also at Piermont was a juvenile Glaucous Gull. The count's other notable birds were Short-eared Owl, Common Loon, and Wilson's Snipe.

The 20 December Peekskill Christmas Bird Count [NYPE] recorded 93 species. Some of the highlights were Northern Saw-whet Owl, Virginia Rail, Snow Goose, four Redhead, Marsh Wren, and an Eastern Phoebe in Yorktown.

The Dutchess Christmas Bird Count [NYDC] recorded Short-eared and Northern Saw-whet Owls on 20 December and tallied 76 species.

Mohonk Lake-Ashokan Reservoir Christmas Bird Count [NYML] was aided by open water and no snow cover. The count found 79 species on 20 December and recorded its second highest bird count with 15,661 individuals. Three Cackling Geese in Kingston were a new addition to the count, and five Northern Pintails were seen for only the second time, with three in New Paltz, and a pair in Marbletown. Record-high counts were established for a remarkable twenty species, including three Iceland Gulls in New Paltz and three Merlins. Other high counts were recorded for Ring-necked Duck (28), Bald Eagle (10), Cooper's Hawk (9), Red-shouldered Hawk (7), Great Horned Owl (7), Northern Saw-whet Owl (3), Red-bellied Woodpecker (85), Downy Woodpecker (161), Hairy Woodpecker (40), Common Raven (25), Tufted Titmouse (364), White-breasted Nuthatch (267), Carolina Wren (68), Eastern Bluebird (195), Savannah Sparrow (14), Northern Cardinal (257), and American Goldfinch (335). Pileated Woodpecker matched their previous high count of 31.

Ulster/Dutchess Christmas Bird Count [NYUD] found 86 species on 27 December including an Eastern Phoebe, Evening Grosbeak in Rhinebeck, and an Orange-crowned Warbler in Sleightsburg.

The Bronx-Westchester Christmas Bird Count [NYBW] on 28 December had 110 of its 124 species in Westchester County thanks to over 100 participants. Highlights for the county were the Indigo Bunting previously mentioned and a Glaucous Gull in Rye. Notable was a 67 year low of Canvasback, with only three off Yonkers. For the second year in a row a new high count was set for Gadwall.

The Putnam County Christmas Bird Count [NYPC] endured snowy weather conditions on 3 January but still managed 77 species. The highlight was a Black-throated Blue Warbler. Bob and Doug Gochfeld discovered it surviving at the Carmel Sewage Treatment Plant. New high counts included eleven Red-shouldered Hawks and thirty-two Pileated Woodpeckers.

Other notable species include: Northern Shrike, Vesper Sparrow, Common Redpoll, and Evening Grosbeak.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CPP – Croton Point P; EGR – Edith G. Read Wildlife Sanctuary; MC – Marshlands Conservancy; SGNWR – Shawangunk Grasslands NWR.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: imm Harrison 16 Dec; Rye Brook 27, 31 Dec; EGR 9, 12, 15, 16, 18, 23 Jan (TB); ad Larchmont Res 12, 23 Jan (TB).

Snow Goose: 400 Bashkill 13 Dec; NYPE 20 Dec; 250 NYML 20 Dec; Rockefeller SP 24 Dec.

Brant: small flocks 5-82 wintered Dec-Feb off Rye.

Cackling Goose: Blue Chip Farm 13 Dec (MZ); Harrison 16, 31 Dec (TB); Walden 20 Dec (JH); Black Dirt Region 28 Dec (MZ); 3 Kingston 20 Dec; 3 Spring L 1 Jan (JCLI); EGR 12, 16, 18, 23, 29 Jan; New Hampton 21 Jan (JH,BN,MZ); Camel Farm, Westtown 21 Jan (JH,BN); Larchmont Res 21 Jan.

Gadwall: 481 NYBW 28 Dec, count record high.

Eurasian Wigeon: Hommocks Conservation Area, Larchmont 4-11, 25 Dec (SO); EGR 14 Jan, 26, 27 Feb (TB).

Blue-winged Teal: 2-3 Round Pond, Amenia 4, 5 Dec (CV,CP,AP); male Millerton 13-17 Jan, 1, 6 Feb (AP,BM,DK), ph.

N. Pintail: MC 8 Dec; 3 New Paltz 20 Dec; 2 Marletown 20 Dec; 10 Millerton 4, 6 Feb.

Redhead: 4 Croton Bay 20 Dec; Five Island Park 22 Jan; Roundout Res 1 Feb; 4-6 Croton Bay 7-28 Feb; 2 Croton R 23 Feb.

Ring-necked Duck: 28 NYML 20 Dec.

Greater Scaup: no huge rafts, seem to winter further south off the Bronx.

Surf Scoter: Glen I 18 Jan.

White-winged Scoter: 3-22 EGR 6, 25, 27 Dec, 6 Jan, 10 Feb; 5 Sackett L 21 Dec (JH).

Black Scoter: Croton Bay 22 Dec; Rye 20 Jan.

Long-tailed Duck: 3 Sackett L 21 Dec; Croton Bay 22 Dec; Kingston 24 Dec; 2 Esopus 25 Jan.

Com. Goldeneye: max 44 Manor P 21 Jan.

Com. Loon: 14 Dec (NYRC).

Horned Grebe: Sylvan L 1-4 Dec; 6 Ashokan Res 27 Dec.

Red-necked Grebe: 2 Piermont Pier 14 Dec; 2 Sylvan L 24 Dec; EGR 27 Dec; New Rochelle 22 Jan; 2 Georges I. Montrose 26 Feb; New Hamburg 27 Feb.

N. Gannet: ad EGR 28 Dec.

HAWKS - LARIDS

Bald Eagle: 10 NYML 20 Dec.

N. Harrier: max 7 SBNWR 1 Feb.

Cooper's Hawk: 9 NYML 20 Dec.

Red-shouldered Hawk: 7 NYML 20 Dec; 9 NYUD 27 Dec; 11 NYPC 3 Jan.

Red-tailed Hawk: 23 Pine Island 14 Dec; leucistic Clinton Corners Dec, 7 Jan.

Rough-legged Hawk: Ellenville 5 Dec; 2 Pine Island 14 Dec; 4 SGNWR 2 Jan, 1 Feb; Millbrook 9 Jan; Millerton 16 Jan; Amenia 29 Jan; Dover 1 Feb; CPP 14 Feb.

Golden Eagle: Wingdale 2 Dec; White Lake 11 Dec; Pine Plains 18 Dec, 3, 29 Jan, 11 Feb; Stissing Pond 3 Jan, 11 Feb; 2-3 Dover Plains 25, 31 Jan, 13, 14, 16, 21, 23, 28 Feb; Southfields 13 Feb; 2 Blue Chip Farm 16-28 Feb; Claryville 21 Feb; Wurtsboro 24 Feb; SGNWR 28 Feb.

Virginia Rail: CPP 20 Dec.

Am. Coot: max 75 Sylvan L 1 Dec.

Killdeer: Larchmont 18 Jan.

Spotted Sandpiper: Somers 25 Jan (TJ), *intro*.

Purple Sandpiper: 12 EGR 6 Dec; 2 EGR 6 Jan; 5 Larchmont 21 Jan; 3 EGR 26 Feb.

Wilson's Snipe: SGNWR 1 Dec; 14 Dec (NYRC); MC 28 Dec; Millerton 14, 16 Jan.

Black-headed Gull: Five Island Park, New Rochelle 1-11 Dec (FGU, JR, RA) ph; Five Island Park, New Rochelle 15 Feb (FGU).

Iceland Gull: NewPaltz 2, 3 Dec; 1-3 Newburgh 15 Dec – 8 Jan; 3 New Paltz 20 Dec; 4 Mohonk Mt House compost 30 Dec; 1-2 Beacon 1, 3, 20-22 Jan; 2 Newburgh 1 Feb; Wallkill 5 Feb; EGR 23 Feb.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: Beacon 22 Jan (CM).
Glaucous Gull: Piermont 14 Dec (NYRC); New Paltz 24 Dec; Rye 28 Dec; Newburgh 1 Feb.

PIGEONS - PARROTS

Barn Owl: Oil City road 29 Jan.
Great Horned Owl: 7 NYML 20 Dec.
Snowy Owl: Wallkill 3 Dec; Swan Lake, Bethel Township 11-15 Dec; 14 Dec NYRC; Kingston 27 Dec; Harrison 4 Jan, ph; Willow 10 Jan; Wallkill NWR 14 Jan.
Short-eared Owl: Verbank 20 Dec; 20 SGNWR 13 Jan; 13 SGNWR 1 Feb.
N. Saw-whet Owl: 2 NYPE 20 Dec; 3 NYML 20 Dec; NYDU 20 Dec; New Paltz 2 Jan.
Red-headed Woodpecker: Shenorock 1, 4 Dec; Ellenville 5 Dec, 5 Feb; 4 Weston Rd Swamp 2 Dec.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: 85 NYML 20 Dec.
Downy Woodpecker: 161 NYML 20 Dec.
Hairy Woodpecker: 40 NYML 20 Dec.
Pileated Woodpecker: 31 NYML 20 Dec; 32 NYPC 3 Jan.
CRESTED CARACARA: Doodletown 5 Jan (DB, EM, GP), 1st State record pending NYSARC approval, *intro*.
Am. Kestrel: only a few reports.
Merlin: MC 1,4 Dec, 15 Jan; 3 NYML 20 Dec; NYUD 27 Dec; Wappingers Falls 30 Dec; Poughquag 1 Jan; Tivoli 10 Jan; Town of Northeast 13 Jan; Kingston 13,19 Jan; Lagrangeville 29 Jan; CPP 21 Feb.
GYRFALCON: Blue Chip Farm 6-28 Feb (KMa, CM); Montgomery 20 Feb (KMc); Gardiner 28 Feb.
Monk Parakeet: max 30 New Rochelle 22 Jan.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: Yorktown 20 Dec (NYPE); NYUD 27 Dec; Unionville 1 Feb (AIB).
N. Shrike: SGNWR 5 Dec (KMa); Bethel 12 Dec (JH); Milan 6 Jan (SJ); Curry 2 Feb (KBe); Kingston 13 Feb (MD); Wallkill 14 Feb; Clinton Corners 27 Feb (JCl).
Com. Raven: 25 NYML 20 Dec.
Horned Lark: max 500 Amenia 31 Jan.
Tufted Titmouse: 364 NYML 20 Dec.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: less common this season.

White-breasted Nuthatch: 267 NYML 20 Dec.

House Wren: Harrison 14 Dec, ph.

Marsh Wren: CPP 20 Dec.

Carolina Wren: 68 NYML 20 Dec.

E. Bluebird: 195 NYML 20 Dec.

N. Mockingbird: leucistic Lagrangeville 19 Dec (CV).

Brown Thrasher: NYPE 20 Dec; Cary IES 19 Jan; Norrie Pt 21 Jan.

Am. Pipit: 41 CPP 20 Dec; Blue Chip Farm 8 Feb.

LONGSPURS – WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: Amenia 15 Dec; 2 Amenia; 6 Pine Plains 27 Jan; 19 Pine Plains 3,4 Feb; SGNWR 7 Feb; 2 SGNWR 28 Feb.
Black-and-white Warbler: Sleightsburgh Spit, Port Ewen 30 Dec (JH).
Orange-crowned Warbler: Sleightsburgh Spit, Port Ewen 27, 28, 30 (MD, DS, PS, JH).
Black-throated Blue Warbler: ad m Carmel wastewater treatment plant 3 Jan (DG).
Palm Warbler: MC 17 Dec (TB).
Pine Warbler: East Fishkill mid Dec-3 Feb (RT).

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: NYML 20 Dec.
Chipping Sparrow: 3 Rockefeller SP Preserve 1 Dec; Ossining 20 Dec; Hartsdale 28 Dec; Pruyn Sanctuary 18 Jan; MC 27 Jan.
Vesper Sparrow: 2 Millerton 25 Jan (CP, HT); Dover Plains 3, 6 Feb (DK).
Savannah Sparrow: NYML 20 Dec; 12 CPP 20 Dec.
White-throated Sparrow: leucistic Red Hook Dec (AG).
White-crowned Sparrow: Poughkeepsie 4, 23, 28 Dec; White Plains 14 Dec; CPP 20 Dec; 2 Marletown 20 Dec; Millerton 13 Jan; 5 Millerton 29 Jan; 1-2 Millerton 6, 8, 20 Feb; Shenorock 12-17 Feb; Pine Island 14, 16 Feb; New Hempstead 15 Feb; Yonkers 15 Feb.
N. Cardinal: 257 NYML 20 Dec.
Indigo Bunting: MC 11, 17, 22, 25-28, 30 Dec- 3, 4 Jan.
E. Meadowlark: 7 SGNWR 27 Dec; 5 SGNWR 17 Jan.
Com. Redpoll: many scattered reports, no large numbers, 24 CPP 24 Jan; 30 CPP 16-23.
Am. Goldfinch: 335 NYML 20 Dec.
Evening Grosbeak: Rhinebeck 27 Dec (DK).

REGION 10—MARINE

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Winter in Region 10 started out deceptively warm. Islip's mean temperature for December was 39.6° F, a significant 4.0° above normal. On 9-10 December, a nor'easter brought buckets of rain and a huge wind to the Region, causing significant flooding and travel delays. Precipitation totals for the month were 6.12", 2.06" above normal, and JFK Airport recorded its wettest December on record, but snowfall was noticeably absent.

In January, winter tightened its grip. Mean temperatures were almost 2° below normal at Islip, at 28.7°, and 2.7° below normal at 29.9° in Central Park. Precipitation totals were 5.25", 1.61" above normal, with what seemed like one snowfall after another. Frigid temperatures set in, and by mid January, local ponds and creeks were frozen over. For the second year in a row, Great South Bay was almost entirely frozen as well, an event rarely seen in recent years. A strong nor'easter hit the Region on 26-27 January, with blizzard conditions, heavy snow, and significant flooding. The eastern end of Long Island was hardest hit, receiving 24-30" of snow. Some mid-Island locations got up to 24" of snow as well, a harbinger of the series of snowstorms and bitter cold blasts that would continue to plague us through the end of the season.

Islip recorded its coldest start to February on record and it remained cold and snowy through the month. The mean temperature was 21.6°, a whopping 11.2° below normal. Precipitation totals measured 2.69", 0.57" below normal.

The Christmas Bird Counts, conducted earlier in the season, had decent weather for the most part, and good coverage. Even the Southern Nassau CBC, the last count of the season on January 3rd, saw above freezing temperatures, and despite being marred by a half day of steady rain, came in with an impressive 132 species. Soon after, the deep snow and treacherous ice at inland parks and natural areas made birding difficult if not impossible, and most certainly resulted in reduced effort at these parks. Even along the coast, access roads and parking lots to state, county and local parks were closed off and unplowed for extended periods of time.

American Bitterns and Great Egrets did not persist to the end of the season. There were several singular reports of half-hardy birds around 18-21 Feb, possibly representing desperate refugees fleeing the terrible conditions throughout the Northeast: Virginia Rail, Greater Yellowlegs, Willet. Half-hardy landbirds were generally poorly reported, especially toward the end of the period, probably due to a combination of genuine scarcity and reduced effort.

Foremost among the season's rarities was the first state record of **Couch's Kingbird**, in lower Manhattan, from an indeterminate date in late November or

early December through 8 January. Zack Winestone noted an odd yellowish bird from his West Village balcony over a period of several weeks prior to 23 December. On that date, he emailed Gabriel Willow of New York City Audubon, who encouraged him to obtain photos. Zack was able to take several excellent photos, which he emailed to Gabriel on Christmas morning—a great Christmas present! Recognizing the bird as apparently a Tropical or Couch's Kingbird, Gabriel obtained Zack's permission to share the photos, posted them to Facebook, along with directions to the area near where the bird had been seen. Early the next morning (26 December), Jacob Drucker beat the crowds down there, and recorded video of the bird calling, proving it to be a Couch's. Crowds of birders arrived that day and on subsequent days and it even made it on the nightly news. The bird was seen through 8 January, most often from the intersection of West 4th Street and West 11th Street to the area around Washington Street and Jane Street, including Abingdon Square Park.

Other Regionally unprecedented reports involved a **Crested Caracara** photographed behind a residence in Seaford, Nassau County, on 10 January, and another (or the same?) photographed perched behind a residence in West Babylon in January or February. In both cases, unfortunately, the birds were never seen again.

CONTRIBUTORS

Italics: Sent end-of-season report. Jorn Ake, Michael Andersen, Bob Anderson (BAn), D. Anderson, Seth Ausubel, Andrew Baksh, David Barrett, Shawn Billerman, Shane Blodgett, Hank Bohne, Thomas W. Burke, Chase Cammarotta, Anthony Ciancimino (ACi), Mike Cooper, Jacob Drucker, Tim Dunn, Andrew Farnsworth, Ken Feustel, Suzy Feustel, John Gluth (JGl), Doug Gochfeld, Andy Guthrie, Bruce Horwith, T. Kernan, Marie King, *Mary Laura Lamont*, Tim Lenz, Jody Levin, Patricia J. Lindsay, *Peter Martin*, Michael McBrien (MMcB), Ken McDermott, Mari Michaelis, Shaibal S. Mitra, Pete Morris, N. O'Reilly, Todd Olson, Patrick Palladino, Jim Pawlicki, Aidan Perkins, Stephane Perrault, Robert Proniewych, Derek Rogers, Jane Ross (JRo), Mike Scheibel (MSch), Steve Schellenger, Sy Schiff (SyS), B. Schweinhart, John Sepenoski, Mike Shanley (MSh), John Shemilt (JSh), Sean Sime, Nadir Souirgi, Taylor Sturm, C. Turner, Gabriel Willow, Angus Wilson (AnW), Zack Winestone, Larry Zirlin.

ABBREVIATIONS

CR – Cemetery of the Resurrection, RICH; JBSP – Jones Beach SP, NASS; JBWE – West End, Jones Beach SP, NASS; JBWR – Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, QUEE; Mass – Massapequa Preserve, NASS; MLUA – Mt. Loretto Unique Area, RICH; OMNSA – Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside, NASS; NYCA – Captree CBC, NYMK – Montauk CBC, NYSA – Sagaponack CBC, NYSN – Southern Nassau County CBC, RI – Randall's I, NEWY; RMSP – Robert Moses SP, SUFF.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE: Riverhead, SUFF area, thru end of Feb (mob, ph.).

Gr. White-fronted Goose: at least 10 reported from four sites: 4 each Hook Pd & Belmont Lake SP, plus singles Riverhead & Meadowbrook Polo Club, NASS 4 Jan (P. Palladino).

ROSS'S GOOSE (R10): two reports of ads 10 Jan: Riverhead (JGI, T. Dunn) & Southaven CP (DR et al., ph.).

BARNACLE GOOSE: Belmont Lake SP 10 Dec (MC) thru 18 Jan (mob).

Cackling Goose: widely reported, including single reps from BRON, NEWY, & KING, plus at least 4 sites SUFF, max 5 Riverhead 3 Jan (AnW, J. Shemilt).

Canada Goose x Snow Goose: West Sayville, SUFF 18 Jan (DR ph.); rare and seldom documented.

TUNDRA SWAN (R10): 2 Hook Pd thru 25 Jan (mob), only reps.

Eurasian Wigeon: Very well reported Dec, RICH, KING, QUEE, NASS and widely in SUFF.

King Eider: JBSP 26 Dec (S. Perrault); Shinn 14 Dec (J. Levin, H. Bohnc); 2+ Montauk area 20 Dec thru (PJL, TWB, mob).

Harlequin Duck: present at traditional sites such as Jones Inlet, NASS, Shinn, Montauk.

Barrow's Goldeneye: most notable were females south and west at Fire I Inlet, SUFF 14 Dec (PJL, SSM, NYCA) & 21 Feb (PJL, SSM) and Moravian Cemetery, RICH (mob), *intro*.

EARED GREBE (R10): Pt. Lookout, NASS 10 Jan (M. Andersen, T. Lenz) to 25 Jan (mob), joined by a second bird in some later reports.

Little Blue Heron: OMNSA 26 Dec (L. Zirlin) & 3 Jan (PJL, SSM), NYSN.

Green Heron: CR 1 Jan (AC, M. King), very late.

Turkey Vulture: widely reported throughout Region.

Osprey: Cold Spring Harbor 26 Dec-5 Jan (C. Turner; S. Schellenger).

No. Goshawk: RMSP 7 Dec (C. Cammarotta); JBWE 12 Dec and frequently thereafter (K&SF, mob); CR 25 Dec (AC); Montauk 20 Dec (B. Horwith, SSM), NYMK.

Bald Eagle: widely reported all counties throughout period; status utterly changed from just 15 years ago—a fairly common species now.

Red-shouldered Hawk: well reported w part of Region (RICH, NEWY, KING, QUEE); most

unusual was one on barrier beach JBWE 13 Dec (SSM, mob, ph.).

Rough-legged Hawk: Napeague 20 Dec (J. Ross et al.), NYMK; Gardiner's 120 Dec (M. Scheibel), NYMK; Jam Bay area 4 Dec thru (SBI, mob).

Clapper Rail: recorded into Feb.

Virginia Rail: last 18 Feb MLUA (AC), *intro*.

American Oystercatcher: Absent after mid Jan.

Semipalmated Plover: SMSP 1 Dec (K&SF).

Greater Yellowlegs: last 20 Feb Marine P, KING (SBI et al.), *intro*.

Willet: Pt. Lookout 21 Feb (D. Anderson), *intro*.

Marbled Godwit: JBWE thru 4 Dec (SSi).

Ruddy Turnstone: recorded into Dec.

Red Knot: recorded into Dec.

Western Sandpiper: JBWE 12 Dec (K&SF).

Long-billed Dowitcher: William Floyd Estate, SUFF 25 Jan (MLL, M. Michaelis, ph), rare in winter.

Wilson's Snipe: recorded into Jan & early Feb along many south shore creeks, QUEE to Mecox Bay and thru end of period Marine P, KING (mob).

Am. Woodcock: very few reps after early Jan.

Dovekie: MP 25 Dec (J. Ake).

Common Murre: small numbers encountered widely over shelf waters southeast of Freeport, NASS 11 Jan, where regular in recent years; by coincidence, one was seen that very day at Jones Inlet (SA, SBI), where onshore occurrence is extremely rare.

Thick-billed Murre: in addition to several reps of single birds in the Montauk area, singles were recorded along Dunc Rd, SUFF 8 Feb (K&SF) and Coney I Creek 12 Feb (SBI et al.); not recorded on 11 Jan pelagic out of Freeport.

Black-legged Kittiwake: apart from widespread observations over shelf waters 11 Jan (out of Freeport), relatively few shore-based reports: 5 RMSP 14 Dec (PJL, SSM), NYCA; 2 Main Beach, Easthampton, SUFF 22 Dec (AG, J. Pawlicki); Amagansett 19 Jan (AnW); 3 L Montauk Inlet 24 Jan (PMo et al.); 3 MP 25 Jan (PJL, SSM).

Black-headed Gull: Sagaponack 21-22 Dec (AG et al.), NYSA; Setauket Mill Pd/Setauket Harbor, SUFF 25 Dec (T. Kernan)-3 Jan (mob); JBWE 15 Dec (BAn) & 1 Jan (SBI et al.); Upper West Side, NEWY 28, 30 Dec, 15 Jan (J. Drucker et al.); Randall's I, NEWY 19 Jan (D.

Barrett); Harlem Ri Dr, NEWY 12 Feb (A. Farnsworth).

Little Gull: MP 25 Jan & 8 Feb (B. Schweinhart et al.; TWB et al.).

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE: Chelsea Waterside P, NEWY thru, from Nov (mob).

CO. GROUND-DOVE: JBWE thru 8 Dec (K. McDermott et al.), from fall.

CRESTED CARACARA: Seaford, NASS, 10 Jan (Charles Sammut, ph, fide S. Schellenger); another was reportedly photographed behind a residence in West Babylon, SUFF in Jan or Feb (fide PM).

COUCH'S KINGBIRD: Greenwich Village, NEWY through 7 Jan (Z. Winestine, mob, ph, vid), *intro*.

CASSIN'S KINGBIRD: Floyd Bennett Field through 5 Jan (mob), from fall.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING (R10): four reports: Miller Place, SUFF 8-11 Jan (A. Perkins, mob ph.); Sands Pt. Pres., NASS 25 Jan (SP); JBWE 12-14 Feb (R. Proniewych, mob ph.); Plum I, SUFF 13 Feb (J. Sepenoski).

Tennessee Warbler: R1 1 Jan (JD, NS, MMcB ph.); very unusual date.

Nashville Warbler: long-staying bird Mass last reported 25 Jan (JGI, TS).

Co. Yellowthroat: 6 reports 1st week of Jan, widely spaced NEWY, KING, NASS, & SUFF, but none thereafter.

Lincoln's Sparrow: late singles Battery Park City, NEWY 11 Jan (JD ph.) & Fort Wadsworth, RICH 1-2 Jan (AC et al., MSh ph.).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: 3 reps from Bronx Zoo: **28 Dec** on NYBW, then **17 & 20 Feb** (N. O'Reilly, ph; Todd Olson), very rare winter.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD: Northville, SUFF 1 Jan (K&SF).

Baltimore Oriole: at least 5 reports of birds at feeders, including 3 at two sites that survived at least to the end of February.

Co. Redpoll: numerous (flocks up to 60) and very widespread throughout Region mid Jan through Feb.

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STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS

Regional rarities appear in **BOLD**; county names are shortened to their first four letters and appear in UPPER CASE letters; months are shortened to their first three letters. In species accounts: number of individuals omitted implies that one individual was reported; ! – details seen by Regional Editor; ad – adult; Alt – Alternate plumage; Am. – American; arr – arrival or first of season; BBS – Breeding Bird Survey; BOTS – bird of the season; CBC – Christmas Bird Count; CO – confirmed nesting; Com. – Common; E. – Eastern; FL – fledgling; FY – adult feeding young; I – Island; imm – immature; intro – see introduction to report; juv – juvenile; L – Lake; max – maximum; mob – multiple observers; N. – Northern; NYSDEC – New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; NWR – National Wildlife Refuge; NYSARC – report to New York State Avian Records Committee; P – park; Pd – Pond; ph – photographed; Pt – Point; Res – Reservoir; Ri – River; SP – State Park; spm – specimen; subad – subadult; T – Town of; thru – throughout period; Twn – township; W. – Western; WMA – Wildlife Management Area; y – young.

REPORTING REGIONS

Regional boundaries coincide with county lines, except at:

Region 1-Region 2 in Orleans, Genesee and Wyoming Counties:

the boundary is NY Route 98 from Pt. Breeze to Batavia;
NY Route 63 from Batavia to Pavilion, and NY Route 19
from Pavilion to the Allegany County line.

Region 2-Region 3 in Ontario County:

the boundary is Mud Creek to NY Route 64, NY Route 64
from Bristol Center to S. Bristol Springs, and Route 21
from S. Bristol Springs to the Yates County line.

Region 3-Region 5 in Cayuga County:

the boundary is NY Route 31.

REPORTING DEADLINES

Winter Season: December, January, February

Deadline is 7 March

Spring Season: March, April, May

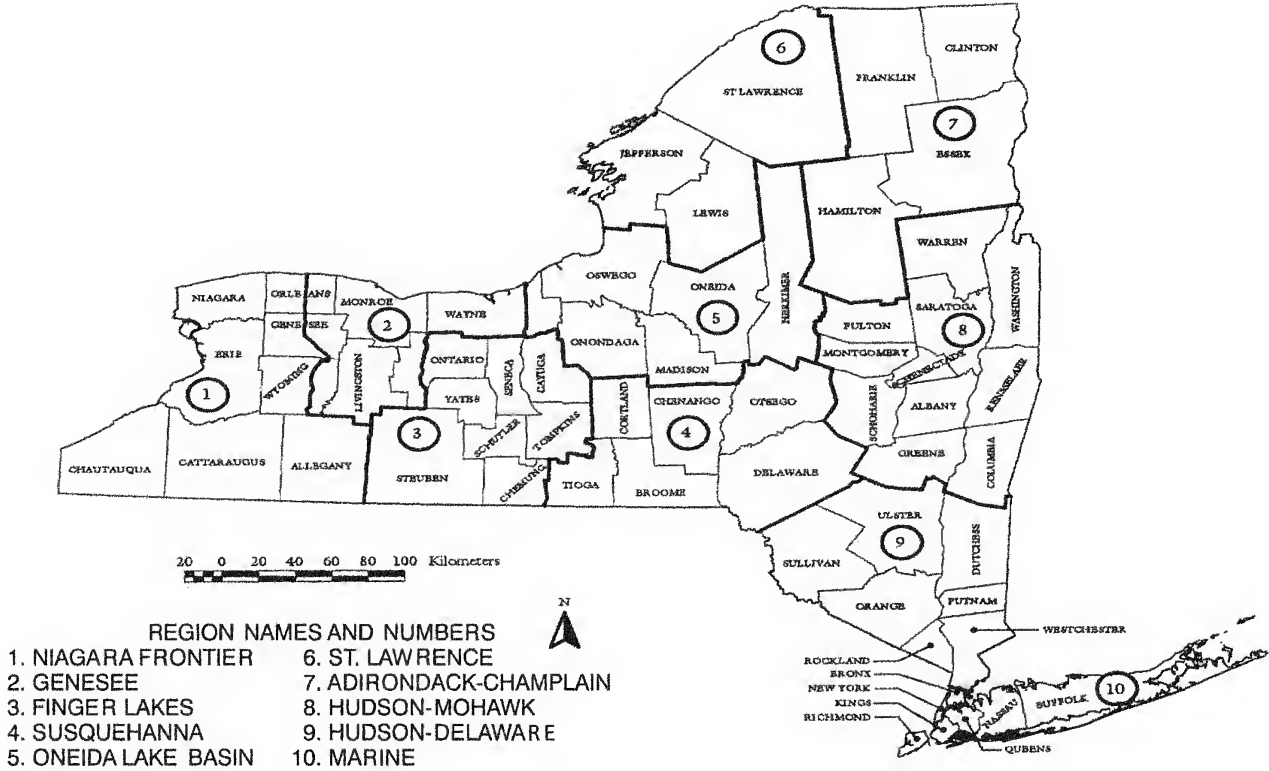
Deadline is 7 June

Summer Season: June, July, August

Deadline is 7 September

Fall Season: September, October, November

Deadline is 7 December



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